

## HUNGER

Perfect body notwithstanding, Carol joined me in having major body-image issues. It was she who introduced me to bingeing and purging, what we now know as bulimia. She said the idea came to her in a class on the history of the Roman Empire. She read that the Romans would gorge themselves on food during orgiastic feasts and then put their fingers down their throats to make themselves throw it all back up and start over again. The idea of being able to eat the most fattening foods and never having to pay the consequences was very appealing.

We would binge and purge only before school dances or just before we were going home for the holidays, and then we would ferret away all the chocolate brownies and ice cream we could get and gobble it up until our stomachs were swollen as though we were five months pregnant. Then we would put our fingers down our throats and make ourselves throw it all up. We assumed that we were the first people since the Romans to do this; it was our secret, and it created a titillating bond between us.

Later it became ritualistic, with specific requirements: I had to be alone (it is a disease of aloneness) and dressed in loose, comfortable clothing. In a catatonic state, I would enter a grocery store to buy the requisite comfort foods, starting with ice cream and moving to breads and pastries—*just this one last time*. My breathing would become rapid (as in sex) and shallow (as in fear). Before eating, I would drink milk, because if that went into me first, it would help bring up all the rest later. The eating itself was exciting and my heart would pound. But once the food had been devoured, I would be overcome with an urgent need to separate myself from it before it took up residence inside me. Nothing could have stood in the way of my getting rid of it, differentiating myself from it—from the toxic bulk that had seemed so like a mother's nurture in the beginning—because if it remained within me, I knew that my life would be snuffed out. Afterward I would collapse into bed and sink into a numbed sleep. *Tomorrow will be different*. It never was.

What an illusion that there were no consequences to be paid! It was years before I allowed myself to acknowledge the addictive, damaging nature of what I was doing. Like alcoholism, anorexia and bulimia are diseases of denial. You fool yourself into believing you are on top of it and can stop anytime you want. Even when I discovered I couldn't stop, I still didn't think of it as an addiction; rather, it was proof that I was weak and worthless. This seems utterly preposterous to me now, but self-



Carol Bentley and me on graduation day at Emma Willard, 1955.

blame is part of the sickness. For me the disease lasted, in one form or another, from sophomore year in boarding school through two marriages and two children, until I was in my early forties. My husbands never knew, nor did my children or any of my friends and colleagues.

Unlike alcoholism, bulimia is easy to hide (except from mothers or friends who have also suffered from the disease). Like most people with eating disorders, I was adept at keeping my disease hidden, because I didn't want anyone to stop me. I was convinced that I was in control anyway and could stop tomorrow if I really wanted to. I was often tired, irritable, hostile, and sick from this, but my willpower to maintain appearances was such that most of the time no one knew the true reasons behind it.

In college I also became addicted to Dexedrine, which I began to take when I was cramming for exams and discovered that it killed my appetite. When I began modeling to earn money for acting classes and to pay the rent, I was easily able to get prescriptions from an infamous New York "diet" doctor—along with diuretics to rid myself of swelling-inducing fluids (and probably doing permanent damage to my kidneys). The Dexedrine made me hyper and emotional, and I began to feel that without it I couldn't act.

There were years when I was actively bulimic and periods of time during those years when the bulimia would be replaced by anorexia (starvation), which Jungian analyst Marion Woodman refers to as the equivalent of an alcoholic's dry drunk. At those times I would hardly eat at all, perhaps an apple core (never a whole apple) or a hard-boiled egg in the course of a day. My skin against my bones became proof of my moral worthiness. The disease would be particularly severe when there was a lot of pressure to be thin, like when I was a fashion model in my early twenties or when I was on the Broadway stage or in a movie where I had to show a lot of my body. I can look at some of my movies and see the disease in my eyes and on my face—a blank, sunken sadness—or the Dexedrine-induced hyperness in some of my television interviews, or the drawn, false thinness that comes with the use of diuretics. How much better I might have been back in those early movies had I been able to show up fully in the roles rather than work half-crippled by a disease that no one knew I suffered from!

My disease would invariably overcome me whenever I was being inauthentic in a relationship, pretending something that I didn't really

feel, betraying myself on some level. Earlier, before adolescence, I could simply absent myself from false relationships—as the Lone Ranger. But as I grew into womanhood, in order to not be alone I assumed a façade so as to be loved by my father or boyfriends. It was always men I was concerned about pleasing. Sustaining inauthentic relationships and the self-abandonment it required placed me in a state of perpetual anxiety. But I chose to "stuff" my real feelings, to split off from them, rather than risk being alone.

Being around food, sitting down at the table for a meal, would cause me terrible anxiety, so I would find ways to avoid food-related social situations. I went through what should have been my most beautiful, sensual, fun-loving years in a cocoon, hiding within my numbness. I reserved what intimacy I had for the scruffy floors of the dorm john and, later, the elegant tiles of the bathrooms in Beverly Hills' best restaurants; I became expert at throwing up everything I'd eaten and returning to the table all cheery and fixed up.

I stopped my food addictions in my forties, but it was not until my third act (my sixties!) that I began to accept myself, imperfections and all, and to reinhabit my body, finding, as Emily Dickinson's poem ends, "That Hunger—was a way / Of persons outside Windows— / The Entering—takes away—"

Emma Willard was founded in 1814 as a female seminary by Emma Hart Willard, a pioneer in education for women. Prior to her advocacy, women's education had been at the mercy of private funding and student tuition, while men's education received state and federal aid.

Did you ever see the movie *Scent of a Woman* starring Al Pacino? The school in that movie is Emma Willard. It sits in Gothic splendor overlooking the wooded hills of upstate New York. It has turrets, gargoyles, leaded windows, and carved wooden balustrades curving up the impressively wide staircases. It is a classy place, and I was miserable a lot of the time I was there. Isn't it the thing to do, be miserable and complain about no boys and strict rules? Actually, I would do it all again in a heartbeat. The teachers were wonderful, the classes stimulating.

Attendance at chapel, replete with hat and gloves, was required every Sunday. The only time I remember being deeply stirred by a sermon was when Reverend Dr. Howard Thurman, the first African-



American dean of chapel at Boston University, preached for us. Because my father was an agnostic, religiosity had been out of the question for me. But I loved Protestant hymns—loved singing them and loved hearing them. Today I often find myself singing those hymns when I'm flying or pulling weeds. There is an improvised scene in *Klute* when, as Bree Daniel, alone in her apartment, sitting at a table, smoking a [pretend] joint, I started singing softly to myself, "God our Father, Christ our brother, all who live in love are thine. . . ." I don't know why I did that—it just came out—and the director, Alan Pakula, always one to appreciate contradictions, left it in.

Freshman year, a group of us would gather after dinner in a small dorm room, flop down on couches, and talk. That's when I realized I was one of the few remaining girls in the class who hadn't gotten her period. There was lots of talk about which were the preferred brands of pads (Kotex), who used Tampax (very few girls), did it hurt to put a tampon in (no), who had cramps, and how long everyone's periods lasted. I was very quiet during these sessions. I didn't want anyone to know I had a faulty "down there." Actually, by then we called it vagina. I had a faulty vagina. About this time, in sophomore year, a man from the Bronx named George Jorgensen Jr. had gone to Denmark and become Christine Jorgensen, with the world's first publicized sex change operation. "Nature made a mistake, which I have corrected," wrote Christine to her parents. "I am now your daughter." The sex transformation scandalized America and made news for months, pushing the Korean War and hydrogen bomb tests on Eniwetok off the front page.

I was obsessed by the story, feeling, like Jorgensen, that a mistake had been made with me: Perhaps I was a boy inside a girl's body. Haunted by this, I would lie on the floor with my legs up on a chair, holding a mirror to see if there were any signs of a penis. It's not easy to study your vagina. It takes commitment. You have to maneuver yourself into the perfect position to catch the light and not cast shadows (or find a flashlight—but either way, positioning the mirror is never easy). I was both fascinated and scared by what I might find in all that confusion of colors and folds. (At least I didn't have to contend with pubic hair. There wasn't a hint of that, nor would there be for years to come.) I found my clitoris, of course, and for a good year was sure it was a penis waiting to be liberated, and I felt sad that Mother wouldn't even be around to learn that her daughter was really her longed-for son. I never told anyone

about my concerns, just as I had never told anyone about my unusual childhood fantasies, the possible molestation by the nanny's boyfriend, or my "down there" sickness at camp. They all stayed inside me, my secret evilness.

I write about my vagina and my vagina-related fears because of the work I have chosen (and sometimes I feel I was "called") to do in my third act. I work with young people on issues surrounding gender, sexuality, early pregnancy, and parenting. It is said that you teach what you need to learn, and through this work I have learned that the traumas and anxieties I experienced as a girl are not unique to me. If I am able to write about my vagina at all, it's thanks to Eve Ensler, author of *The Vagina Monologues*. While some of you are probably wishing that was one epiphany I hadn't had, it's important for women and girls to be able to talk about that most complex part of themselves. It can represent an important owning of ourselves. Vaginas are, after all, very talented and versatile. They can stretch, shrink, give birth, feel and give pleasure. In 2001, just before coming briefly out of retirement to perform in *The Vagina Monologues* at Madison Square Garden, I said to Barbara Walters on *20/20*, "If penises could do half of what vaginas can do, there'd be postage stamps honoring them and a twelve-foot-tall bronze statue of a penis in the Rotunda of our nation's Capitol." Instead, because vaginas belong to the other gender, they have been raped, pried, cut, sewn up, objectified, and generally denigrated down through the centuries—the sorts of things one does to (apparent) objects of fear that men have so often needed to dominate.

My personal vagina was nothing but a pain in the ass till my late teens. The rest of me had succeeded in blending in rather well, but my vagina was a determined holdout. By sophomore year I took to buying Kotex (very publicly) and pretending that I too had a period. My interest in health and fitness, which surfaced midlife, was anything but evident early on. I hated physical education class and team sports, so since I was faking it anyway, I gave myself the most frequent, longest-lasting, crampiest periods in school as a way of getting excused from gym. I lived month to month, horrified I might be discovered. Scientific studies have shown us that girls who are scared of becoming women sometimes will their hormones into remaining inactive, thereby postponing puberty. Perhaps that was happening with me, because God knows I was scared of what being a woman might lead to—becoming my mother!

On vacations I'd go home to New York City, where Peter and I each had a bedroom in Dad and Susan's snug brownstone. At Christmas 1951, I went out on my first real date. Danny Selznick, son of David O. Selznick, fabled producer of *Gone with the Wind*, had invited me to go with him, his father, and his stepmother, Jennifer Jones, to see the Broadway play *Dial M for Murder*. I had known Danny off and on since childhood and would sometimes go to his house to play, but dating was something else again. I was excited and nervous, knowing that Danny was more worldly than I was and that he had also dated Brooke several times. Brooke, by the way, was still living in Greenwich and would soon appear on the cover of *Life* magazine as the debutante of the year.

For my date with Danny, Susan got me a gray shantung party dress that had a low scooped neck, and she showed me how to wear falsies. Under the dress I wore a stiff crinoline underskirt, as was the fashion in those days: tiny waist with full skirt to accentuate it, a style that played to my assets. Then, just as in the movies: The doorbell rang. Susan answered, I came down the staircase to greet Danny, we went out and got into a limousine with Mr. Selznick and Jennifer Jones, and the four of us went to have a pretheater dinner at some fancy restaurant. I remember ordering a small steak. As I was cutting it, the piece slipped off the plate and down the front of my dress, where my falsies stopped it from sliding all the way down to my waist. I pretended nothing had happened and hoped no one would notice. But after a while grease began to darken the front of the gray shantung. I excused myself and went into the ladies' room, covering my greasy chest with my purse and cursing my bad luck at being the clumsiest girl in the world. Just as the bathroom door closed behind me and I was reaching down the front of my dress, Jennifer Jones walked in and saw me. Jennifer *Song-of-Bernadette*, *Duel-in-the-Sun* Jones caught me as I was pulling a steak out of my dress! Totally mortified, I tried to disguise what I was doing, but Jennifer saw right away and laughed so sweetly. "Oh, Jane, you poor thing," she said, "let me help you!" And she stuffed some paper towels down my dress (*Oh please, God, don't let her feel the falsies*) and mopped up the grease, rubbed the outside with a warm, wet towel (so it wouldn't stain), gave me her shawl to cover the wet mark, and with a loving hug walked with me back to the table. From then on Jennifer topped my list of mensches—a well-known Yiddish word for all-around decent human being.

The second summer we were all together—Dad, Susan, Peter, and me—we rented a small house in the woods at the very end of Lloyd Neck, Long Island, so that Dad could commute into the city for his play *Point of No Return*.

That summer I battled bouts of depression, though no one thought of it as such, least of all me. I just saw it as "life." Some days I would sleep twelve or thirteen hours and be scolded by Dad for being lazy and moody. This was my first experience of feeling as if a party were going on somewhere else and I was left out and always would be. I could see no future ahead of me. Even the woods didn't beckon anymore. Just as adolescence marked the beginning of my rejection of my body, so it saw me moving away from the natural world I had depended on as a child.

On nearby estates, debutantes threw elaborate parties and danced with boys from elite prep schools like Phillips Andover and Phillips Exeter. I wanted so much to be included, but I didn't know how to go about it and Dad wasn't part of that ritzy Long Island scene.

Then, to make matters worse, I was invited to Syracuse, New York, to visit a girl from Emma Willard who had been my "big sister" freshman year and who desperately wanted to be my friend, though we had little in common. I didn't really want to go, but I didn't know how to say no (a problem that would plague me for longer than I'd like to admit). I was shocked when I arrived in the Syracuse station to find two reporters waiting to interview me: HENRY FONDA'S DAUGHTER COMES TO SYRACUSE TO VISIT SCHOOL. MATE was the angle, with the local family's name prominently displayed, of course. I felt uncomfortable being interviewed, since I was not famous and had nothing to say, and I resented being put in this position by my friend—though of course I said nothing to her.

On the second day of my visit, we went to Lake Ontario. I decided to try out a new dive I had recently seen in a movie, where you run and fling yourself across the low waves in an effort to skim their surface. But I misjudged, and instead of skimming I hit the top of my head on the lake floor. Right away I felt something bad had happened and quickly pushed myself off the bottom, but when I surfaced and opened my mouth to scream for help, no sounds came out. My inability to make any noise frightened me. I managed to crawl out of the surf and up onto the sand, where I lay very still. I couldn't move or speak, and there was a dull pain in my back. My friend and her mother came over to see what was wrong, and I motioned for them to let me just lie there for a while. In time I was able to talk and

slowly get myself up, into their car, back to their house, and into bed. The next morning I told them I needed to go back to the city. I felt strange, but mostly I thought I was exaggerating as a way to go home early. On the train ride back, I told the conductor that I needed to lie down on a full seat because my back was broken—and then felt guilty for lying to him.

I hung around our house in the city for four or five days and then went backstage at the theater to see my father. "Dad," I said, trying not to sound whiny, "I think there is something wrong with my back. I think maybe I should get an X-ray." Dad called Susan, who came and took me to the hospital. The X-rays showed that I had fractured five vertebrae between my shoulder blades. The doctors said it was a miracle that I wasn't paralyzed. One false move over the last five days, they said, could have done it for life.

Nowadays broken backs are treated very differently, but this was the fifties. The doctors put me in a plaster cast that reached from my collarbone to my pubic bone, a thick, heavy straitjacket. They didn't even bother to give me the semblance of a waist. A few weeks earlier I had received my first invitation to one of the big, formal dances I had so coveted. Now what was to become of me? My life was surely over. Not so, said Susan, and she took me to a maternity store, where I got an evening dress for pregnant women. When the big night came she paid special attention to my hair, gave me a little makeup, and hovered over me till I had pinned on the orchid corsage my date brought me and was safely in the backseat with him.

I was mysteriously popular at the dance. Lots of boys cut in, probably because they wanted to see what the body cast felt like up against their chests and bellies. I, on the other hand, wanted to feel their chests and bellies against mine, but the titillation of those first swelling, through-your-clothing body contacts would have to wait.

Fall came and it was time to return to Emma Willard, this time wearing maternity clothes because of the cast. The good news was that I didn't have to take phys ed. The bad news had to do with breasts. It seemed everyone had them by now except me. Of course, I hadn't had them two months earlier, when the doctors had put the cast on, but they'd left me no growing room and there was no give to the plaster. If my breasts were trying to grow, I was sure they'd be stunted permanently. Now it wasn't just a faulty vagina I would have to deal with but breasts that grew inward!

I finally got my period the summer of 1954, when I was sixteen and a half. After all my concerns about it, when it finally came I assumed it was a terrifying sign that I was bleeding to death from a wound in my faulty vagina. Susan woke me to the reality that I was menstruating. She held a towel for me to wrap myself in, handed me a Kotex pad to stick between my legs, and as I stepped out of the shower threw her arms around me, saying, "Oh, Jane, congratulations. You're a woman now!" A woman? While her words eased my fear of imminent death from blood loss, I felt another anxiety rise.

*Woman? But I don't want to be a woman. Women are destroyed.*

That afternoon Susan told me that I needed to establish a relationship with a gynecologist—she knew a very good one. She also told me that since I was now able to become pregnant, I ought to discuss birth control with the doctor and I should consider my relationship with him totally confidential. "I hope you will not have sex, Jane," she added. "You're still too young. But you need to know about contraception." What a smart stepmother! She did what every mother or stepmother should do when their daughters begin to menstruate.

His name was Dr. Lazar Margulies and he would be the pioneer of the now-famous spiral-shaped, plastic IUD. I burst into tears the moment I sat down in his office and began to describe to him all my fears about my down there, all the years of pent-up anxiety, the "Christine Jorgensen, I think I'm meant to be a man" worry—all of it came sobbing out of me. Clearly, he was used to seeing adolescents with fears and questions and listened to me with great patience. It was wonderful to have someone professional who wouldn't judge me, someone to whom I could address these difficult questions. Every child should be so lucky. When the time came for my examination, I squeezed my eyes tight and held my breath while he did what gynecologists do. And when he pronounced me 100 percent normal I burst into tears again—this time out of relief.

We discussed the available contraceptive choices: The pill hadn't yet arrived, but there were diaphragms and copper IUDs. I liked the idea of an IUD, because I didn't have to worry about putting a diaphragm in correctly. The decision was made then and there.

I remember times at Emma Willard when someone would pass around a list of every sexual act we could imagine, and we'd check off what we'd done. Carol Bentley could check off just about everything:



French kissing, intercourse, oral sex, and all sorts of other things that made my breathing change just talking about them. I was in awe of her. All I'd done was kiss (no tongue) and pet, so I'd check off things I hadn't done, like French kissing and intercourse. Junior and senior year I had two boyfriends (one after the other), and with each one I tried to have intercourse. But in spite of all the huffing and puffing and rug burns, it didn't work. My body didn't seem receptive, it wouldn't let them in. Despite my doctor's assurances, this gave me a new reason to think something was wrong with me.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# WAITING FOR MEANING

*They use wise discretion in disguising themselves with the caricatures we design for them. And unfortunately for us, as for them, too often adolescents retain the caricatured personalities they had merely meant to try on for size.*

—LOUISE J. KAPLAN,  
psychologist

**D**URING THE YEARS after Emma Willard and before becoming an actor, I was basically just treading water—waiting for meaning. I'm rumored to have done some wild things: ridden a motorcycle into a bar, danced on a table while stripping, setting a fire in the dorm. At Vasars, where we supposedly had to wear gloves and pearls to dinner (untrue), I'm said to have flouted the rules by coming downstairs in gloves and pearls and nothing else. *Moi!* I confess to having harbored a fondness for shocking, but frankly I never had that kind of chutzpah. My life outside of school was very different from the other girls'. They could just call up and meet friends at the local drive-in; they had boyfriends they jilterbugged with at sock hops in their basements. I didn't do any of those things. The reflected glamour of being Henry Fonda's daughter, who lived in New York City and could put on a good façade, made people think I was more experienced and sophisticated than I was.

To make up for what I lacked, I borrowed bits and pieces of other

people's personae and wove them together into large enough patches of personality to get by on dates or at parties. Only when I was comfortable with someone would I garnish this carefully constructed persona with my uniqueness, but generally I looked and behaved as conventionally as seersucker, blending perfectly into the flat, Ozzie-and-Harriet-Kelvinator-Wonder-Bread, predigested world of the fifties.

Acting never beckoned. I was too self-conscious and never heard anyone—certainly not my father—talk about getting emotional fulfillment from acting. I never connected acting with *joy*. In fact, I had developed a philosophy: "Actors are too egotistical. I have problems enough. I don't want to encourage my self-centeredness—it's not for me." In truth I thought of myself as fat and boring, and I was scared to death of failure.

The summer after my last year at Emma Willard, the family went to Europe, where my father was filming *War and Peace* in Rome with Audrey Hepburn. That summer Susan decided she'd had enough of the lonely marriage, and she told Dad she wanted a divorce.

"I couldn't be myself," she told Howard Teichmann. "I wanted to discuss problems with him, and he'd turn a deaf ear. He had an ability to avoid confrontations with me. . . . [But when] his anger broke out it was terrifying. Slowly it dawned on me that I had always been afraid of this man." And slowly she had come to realize that what she had taken in the beginning for charming shyness was a more clinical rigidity that, try as she might, she could not break through. She told me that Dad would go all day without speaking to her and then, buoyed by male entitlement, hop into bed at night and expect her to make love with him.

"I'm not a machine, Jane," she said sadly. She had begged him to go into therapy with her and he'd refused. When she went to a therapist on her own (to address her bulimia), Dad told her she'd have to pay for it herself.

Susan was helping me see that what I had witnessed in my father for so long was neither imagined nor my fault. Here was a woman who, unlike my mother, was able to walk away rather than continue to live in a superficial relationship—walk away not to another man but to *herself*. She was his third wife, but introspection and professional help weren't Dad's way or his generation's way. As a result, he was married again in less than two years, to an Italian woman he met during the filming in Rome. That marriage, his fourth, would last not even four years.

Susan had come into our lives, and now she was going. But Peter and I would be forever grateful for what she had brought us.

In 1955 I was accepted at Vassar College (I had applied because Carol Bentley was going there) and went with Peter, Dad, and Aunt Harriet to spend the next summer in Hyannis Port, on Cape Cod. Dad had just completed filming *12 Angry Men*, Sidney Lumet's first time directing a feature film (Sidney would go on to direct such greats as *Serpico* and *Dog Day Afternoon*). The rental house was located just behind the Kennedy compound. Since Dad knew the Kennedys, we saw them from time to time. To say they were like royalty is a cliché, but it's the truth.

The Dennis Playhouse was in easy driving distance from our house and had a summer apprenticeship program that Dad felt might interest me, at least the backstage, scenery-making part of it. While some acting classes were involved and the apprentices were sometimes given the opportunity to play small roles in the professional summer stock productions that came through on tour, the decision to enroll me in the program was in no way meant as encouragement for me to become an actress. Dad made that clear to both Peter and me: Acting was a very difficult profession to succeed in. He had too many friends who'd ended up performing at auto shows.

On the first day of the program, we were introduced to the stage manager, James Franciscus, whom everyone called Goey, and the moment I saw him the complexion of the summer changed. He was blond, blue-eyed, and movie-star handsome; in fact, he later became something of a star, playing the lead in such television series as *Naked City* and *Mr. Novak* and in thirty-some movies. As it happened, he was also a sophomore at Yale. I was smitten. My previous inarticulate philanderings had not prepared me for true romance, and I was very shy with him. Goey, I would soon discover, may have looked like a playboy, but he was shy, too.

Goey supervised the apprentices, so there was ample opportunity for us to be together. It soon became apparent that my interest in him was reciprocated. We talked a lot. I discovered there were things about Goey to like beyond his looks and the fact that he went to Yale: He was smart and literate; he had a sense of humor, lived in New York City, and was a preppy (only by virtue of Yale), but didn't belong to a fraternity. His fam-

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ily wasn't rich, he had to work, he didn't love football, and he had a passion. Other boys I'd liked had hobbies but no passion. Goey's passion was an epic drama he was writing in iambic pentameter. When he read me what he'd written so far, about a third of the entire piece, it seemed heroic and profound.

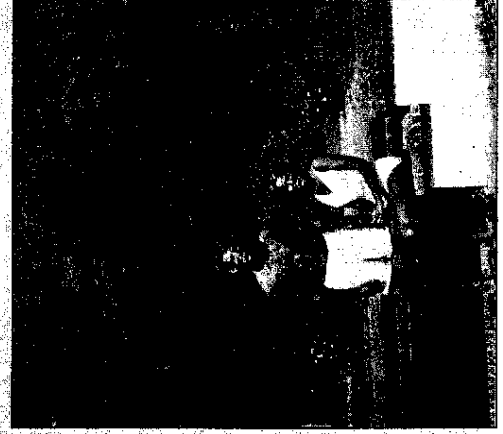
Finally, one Saturday before I went home, he asked if he could take me to dinner the next evening, since there were no performances to stage-manage on Sunday nights. He picked me up in his old red Ford convertible, I remember that part, but nothing of the dinner or what we talked about. It's what happened afterward that still reverberates in my body when I think about it. Goey and I drove to the pier at the end of the Kennedy compound right near our house, walked out to the very end of it, and stood looking out at the setting sun. I didn't know what to say, so I just stood still. Hoping. Heart racing so loud I was sure he could hear it. Then he put his hands on my shoulders, turned me to him, and looked deeply into my eyes. His look was so long and intense that I felt embarrassed and started to pull away, but he wouldn't let me. He held me firm and then, with his eyes still looking into mine, slowly pulled me into him. My body swooned against him, my knees buckled, and he had to hold me to keep me from falling, which made him laugh while he was kissing me, a laugh of pleasure. When our lips parted I stepped back and had to sit down, *plunk*. Everything was swirling: the sea, the sky. *The sky!* I will never forget the sky, the way it looked right then. It was a different color from what it had been two minutes before, all covered with a shimmering haze. Hemingway's line "And the earth moved" came to me. This is what he meant! I thought. The earth is moving.

It was my first swoon, and while it wouldn't be my last, there's something about that first swoon—and the boy who caused it. Goey and I became an item. We were together every spare minute for the rest of that summer. I was eighteen, he was twenty, and we seemed so much younger than most kids that age seem today. Though we kissed endlessly and exchanged furtive caresses in the moonlight, we never made love, and I relished the sweet pleasure of postponement. It was the best summer of my so-far life.

Dad brought his new woman friend up to Hyannis Port. She was a Venetian woman in her thirties, with green eyes, red hair, and a certain hard-sell charm that Peter and I mistrusted instantly. "Phony" was the word that came to both our minds. We figured he intended to marry her,



Peter, Susan holding Amy (the daughter Susan and Dad had adopted at birth), me, and Dad en route to Rome, where he filmed *War and Peace*. (Betmann/Corbis)



Goey and me at the pool by our house in Villefranche.



since he never exposed us to girlfriends unless marriage was at hand. We sensed immediately that this was no Susan, no cozy, openhearted step-mother, but we were just enough older that it didn't matter as much as it would have earlier. In some ways my relationship with my father seemed to grow even more distant the closer to womanhood I got, and his choosing to bring this Italian woman into his life created further distance. But I loved him dearly, and his long shadow was still the defining factor of my life.

I had been trying (sequentially) to lose my virginity for at least a year and a half with three different boyfriends, but it hadn't worked in the total-penetration sense—almost, but not quite. It fell in the “but I didn't inhale” category. (This technicality matters if you're trying to prove to yourself that your “down there” is normal.) My persistent virginity just sort of sloughed away incrementally and—as Carrie Fisher wrote in *Sur-render the Pink*—“not because it was so large that it took three times to knock it out.” It was more that my body simply said, *Sorry, not ready*. (I couldn't call what we did making love because it wasn't, and I didn't know then that the love part would be important to me. After all, it hadn't been important to Carol Bentley, or so she said.) Later on I remember listening (sequentially) rapt and envious as two of my husbands told me of their own first times.

Vadim had lost his virginity rapturously in a haystack in France during World War II. As he wrote later in *Memoirs of the Devil*, when he climaxed, the ceiling of the barn “began to move. The ground trembled. . . . An apocalyptic rumbling filled the air.” Vadim assumed at first this was the result of his orgasm (the Hemingway factor again). What had happened, however, was that he had chosen to lose his cherry “at one of the great moments of history: zero hour, 6 June 1944—the first wave of the Allied landings in Normandy”—and the barn was only a few kilometers from the coast.

Ted Turner, on the other hand, didn't make love until he was nineteen years old, but when it happened it was such an epiphany he “did it again ten minutes later” (a story he told me on our second date and often thereafter for ten years, if there was someone around who hadn't heard it before).

I can make no such life-altering claims. I simply don't remember. I know that it happened with Goey that fall at Yale. I do have an acute

memory of how it felt the first time we spent an entire weekend alone together during a blizzard at a small farm his family had in upstate New York: having a whole house to ourselves, not having to worry about noise, waking up in the same bed, taking baths together, him teaching me to make whiskey sours. That part I remember. Just not the sex.

Having a steady boyfriend who was writing a classical drama validated me. I decided to ask for a dorm room of my own at Vassar, preferably a tiny garret where I could appropriately wallow in existential angst, recite speeches from Shakespeare, listen to Mozart and Gregorian chants, and read Kant into the night.

In the mid-1950s, most of the girls I knew didn't go to college to learn where their interests and talents lay in order to prepare for a profession. It was what they did until they got hitched. And they were dropping like flies. Carol Bentley left Vassar in our second year to get married, and so did Brooke Hayward. Most Americans then believed that there was something wrong with a girl if she wasn't at least engaged by the time she left college. Not me. Much as I enjoyed my relationship with Goey, I was never tempted to consider marriage. In this one area, at least, I had the good sense to know that if I got hooked to one man at that point in my life, I'd get stuck someplace I didn't belong.

One day during sophomore year I got a call from the headmaster of Westminster, the boarding school Peter had graduated to, telling me that Peter had flipped out and I should come get him.

When I arrived I found him hiding in some bushes, his hair bleached light blond. He asked me to call him Holden Caulfield, the antihero in J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*; Holden is kicked out of his prep school because he refuses to adjust to the phoniness he finds there. I bundled Peter up to take him—where could I take him? “Home,” Dad's house in New York, wouldn't do because Dad was away working someplace and we weren't allowed to stay there alone. I couldn't keep him with me at Vassar. So I called Aunt Harriet in Omaha. Peter ended up living with her and Uncle Jack for four years.

When he first arrived they had him tested to see if he was crazy; the answer was that he needed help. They also tested whether or not he should repeat a grade; it turned out he had an IQ of over 160—in the genius category. So he began psychoanalysis (with financier Warren Buf-

fett's father-in-law) and entered the University of Omaha. Peter was the nonconformist who "acted out." Psychotherapist Terrence Real writes in *I Don't Want to Talk About It* that acting-out boys are "little protesters, sit-down strikers refusing to march off into the state of alienation we call manhood. . . . We usually call these boys delinquents." People would say about Peter, "Well, he's just looking for attention," and I'd nod in agreement, thinking, Why can't Peter just grow up? Today, if I heard adults saying that about a kid like Peter, I'd shout, "So why don't you give him some of the attention he's looking for *before* he starts acting out, some *loving* attention!"

I acted out, too, in my way. But I was much more ready to buy into the system than Peter ever was. I never ventured too close to the edge. I knew how to play both sides—almost getting into big trouble but never really.

Aside from my relationship with Goey, nothing much remains from the two years I spent at Vassar. I drank too much, didn't study enough in spite of my good intentions, "experimented among the passions," became hooked on Dexedrine, got better grades than I deserved, and wasn't inspired by my teachers. I've learned over the years that for me to want to study, it can't be the generic liberal arts approach. I have to understand *why* I am learning, what I'm learning *for*, have to feel the *need* to learn because it relates in a palpable way to my life, to what I am *doing*. For the last twelve years or so, because of my nonprofit work with youth and families, I have needed to know *why* people behave as they do and what causes them to change. So I devour books on psychology, relational theory, behavioral sciences, early child development, international development, and women's biographies. But at Vassar I didn't know what I was learning *for*.

In my final music-history exam, I used my exam book to draw pictures of women screaming. A few days later, when I was called into the dean's office, I fully expected to be told I had flunked out. Instead I was told that they understood I was going through a difficult emotional time because my father had just married again (the Italian), so I would be allowed to take the music exam over. This seemed preposterous. I didn't feel emotionally upset over Dad's marriage—I was injured by then—and I found it disturbing to be let off the hook that way. I wanted and needed to be held accountable for my actions, to be challenged. That's when I decided I was wasting my time and Dad's money and that I should leave.

I told Dad that I hadn't finished my exams and didn't want to go back to college in the fall, and then I found myself telling him that I wanted to go to Paris to study painting. The truth is I wasn't entirely sure that was what I wanted, and I secretly hoped Dad would save me from myself and say no. Maybe he was distracted by his new wife. Maybe the two of them wanted me out of their hair. Whatever the reason, he agreed to let me go.

The summer of 1957 Dad rented a villa on the French Riviera near the town of Villefranche, which still retained the charm of a small fishing village. The villa was large, with a generous front yard, a pool, and a lawn rolling straight out to the edge of the rocky cliffs that rose at least one hundred feet above the Mediterranean. They did a lot of entertaining all summer long—or rather Afdera, his wife, entertained. Dad had never been part of the international jet set. It was touching to watch him try to disguise his discomfort and fit in, usually by hiding behind his camera. I loved that about him.

The luminaries of the international elite would come and go: Gianni and Marella Agnelli; Jacqueline de Ribes; Princess Marina Cicconia and her brother, Bino; Count and Countess Volpi and their son, Giovanni; Senator Kennedy and Jackie. Elsa Maxwell, the internationally known "hostess with the mostest," had rented the adjacent villa. We visited Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis on his enormous yacht, the *Christina*—which had a Picasso hanging in the living room, gold-leafed faucets in the bathrooms, a mosaic swimming pool, and always many pretty girls with secrets in their eyes who talked easily with men who owned Picassos. We paid a visit to Picasso in his nearby studio. We met Jean Cocteau, Ernest Hemingway, and Charlie Chaplin. I was continually speechless.

One afternoon when Dad and Afdera were entertaining, Greta Garbo came over with a female companion. After a perfunctory drink with the guests, she and her friend went into the house and came out wearing terry-cloth robes and white rubber swimming caps, the serious kind worn by professional swimmers. Garbo asked if I wanted to go swimming in the sea with her. You could have fanned me with a brick. Greta Garbo! By the way, she was the only guest all summer who expressed interest in leaving the social scene and walking down the steep steps carved into the cliffs to swim in the sea. I had done it myself only a few times—it was a long way down and the water was cold. But down we

went—Garbo, her companion, and me. When we got to where the waves broke over the rocks, Garbo threw off her robe to reveal her *naked* athletic body, stepped out to the farthest rock, and did a perfect dive into the water—none of the dipping toes in first, then knees, the “let’s get used to it gradually” approach I preferred. I reminded myself that she was Scandinavian, after all, held my breath, and threw myself in after her (wearing a bathing suit, of course). She swam vigorously for quite a ways without stopping, then turned and swam back, meeting up with me as I was trying to catch up. We bobbed about, treading water and looking at each other. Garbo’s face was luminous and utterly pure, not a trace of makeup.

Then, in that throaty *Ninotchka* voice, she asked me, “Are you going to be an actress?”

I was stunned that she had asked me about myself.

“No,” I said, “I don’t have talent.”

“Well,” said Garbo, “I bet you do, and you’re pretty enough to be one.” *Oh my God!*

“Thank you,” I said, swallowing a mouthful of salty water while my thoughts careened about: *She’s just being polite. But wait a minute—some one who leaves the party to go swimming nude doesn’t say things just to be polite. But how could Garbo think I’m pretty?*

We crawled out onto the rocks to dry in the sun, and I noticed that her body was healthy and athletic but not pinup beautiful. This made me feel good: Maybe you could be adored even if you didn’t have a perfect figure. I remember climbing up the steps to the house behind Garbo and trying to hide the Cheshire Cat grin I could feel spreading across my face.

The village of Villefranche is just to the west of Monaco, the small independent kingdom then ruled by Prince Rainier and his wife, Grace Kelly. On the curve of the Monte Carlo harbor was the resort and casino where the rich and famous gambled. Every Saturday night in the summer there would be a gala ball where the jet set would dine, drink champagne, and dance under the stars. At the evening’s close there would be an astonishing display of fireworks. Aldera arranged blind dates for me with the sons of rich counts or industrialists; I think she was hoping I would marry one—probably to get me out of the New York house but also because it would add to her cachet. I was never tempted to get serious with any of the men I met at the time—the upper-crust idle rich—any more than with the Ivy Leaguers I had met in school. I needed

someone who could take me into other worlds—not of wealth but of passion and intensity. I needed a rebel, an adventurer, an outsider.

Goey and a friend of his from Yale, José de Vicuna, came to visit for a week. José, a sophisticated Spaniard, knew his way around the area and had friends to stay with, but Goey stayed in one of the many guest rooms in our villa. We would manage to meet in my room while the adults were taking afternoon siestas. I developed a fondness for lovemaking in the afternoon, lying languidly under a gently whirring ceiling fan. The roll-down canvas awnings outside the large Mediterranean windows cast long shadows on the bedroom’s cool tiled floor, and the noise of the fan became synonymous with pleasure.

One afternoon Goey, José, and I drove along the coast to the small sepia-colored old fishing town of Saint Tropez. We got there just as the sun was setting, and I was awestruck by its beauty and charm. Tourists had just discovered it thanks to the recently released film . . . *And God Created Woman*, directed by a young first-time director, Roger Vadim, and starring his then wife, Brigitte Bardot.

It was sometime that summer that I realized the love affair with Goey was beginning to dim. I was getting bored. He seemed stuck, and I realized that his classic drama in iambic pentameter was emblematic—he could never get past the first act. I felt this like a cold whisper in my body but avoided talking to him about it, because I didn’t want to hurt him. I am ashamed that while I no longer felt the same, I pretended nothing had changed. In doing so, I set him up for real pain when the time to turn him down finally came, and I set myself up for what was to become a familiar sense of self-betrayal. The following year, when Goey proposed and I declined, it became impossible for us to continue seeing each other as friends, and my first real love affair came to a whimpering end after a year and a half.

When the summer of 1957 came to an end, Dad and Aldera went with me to Paris, where they had arranged for me to be a *pensionnaire* in an apartment on the tree-lined avenue d’Iéna, on the Right Bank. The daughter of one of Aldera’s friends had stayed there while at finishing school. Aldera wanted me to attend finishing school as well, where young ladies from wealthy families learned manners. But I balked and enrolled instead in the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, an art school on the more bohemian Left Bank, where I intended to study painting and drawing.



Susan, my ex-stepmother, had been living in Paris for almost a year, and having her there was a comfort. But Susan had her own life now and probably assumed that at nineteen I was as mature as she had been at that age. Part of me carried the aura of maturity, but inside I was still immature and in serious need of imposed structure and boundaries. Yet I was unable to impose them on my own. I felt porous, like a colander—things just poured into me and seeped out: No there there. I had gotten in over my head and was lonely and scared. Here I was, living in a foreign city where I knew no one but Susan, spoke only halting, academic French, and didn't know my way around.

The apartment where I was staying belonged to a gray-haired woman who had once been of the haute bourgeoisie (the fine furnishings, silver, and porcelains testified to that), but there was a penurious quality about her. She wore only black and was exceedingly dour, as was her adult daughter who lived there with her. They never turned on the lights or opened the draperies, and all the living room furniture was perpetually covered in plastic sheets. Had it not been for the faint sour odor of boiling turnips, which seemed embedded in the drapes and carpet, the place could have been mistaken for a morgue.

I'm ashamed to say I attended only three classes during the two and a half months I was in Paris. Saying that I wanted to take art classes turned out to have been simply a way of getting myself out of college. Mostly I sat in sidewalk cafés and read books and newspapers.

I was smitten by Paris: Hector Guimard's art nouveau entrances to the Métro, fanciful and enchanting as Maxfield Parrish's paintings; the weeping willows and plane trees bordering the Seine; the *bateaux-mouches* carrying tourists up and down the river under the ornate, low-spanning iron bridges; the doe-colored stone buildings along the Seine with sloping, slate-tiled mansard roofs, separated into blocks by narrow cobblestone streets. I liked the sense of history evident everywhere. It reminded me how young my own country was.

One night I was at Maxim's for dinner and dancing with a group of people that included the French actress Marie-José Nat and actor Christian Marquand. A tall, dark man with exotic eyes and an erotic aura joined our group. With him was a beautiful woman who looked to be nine months pregnant. The way the energy in Maxim's shifted when he made his entrance reminded me of entering public places with my father. This was my first encounter with Roger Vadim.

He had become an overnight celebrity with the release of . . . *And God Created Woman*, which, because of his youth (he was not even thirty) and its irreverent, iconoclastic style, came to be seen as the film that launched the *nouvelle vague* (new wave) of French cinema. But above all, it was the presence of the phenomenal Bardot that had audiences, especially in the United States, flocking to see it.

I had not realized that Vadim and Brigitte were no longer together. Apparently she had fallen in love with her leading man in the film, and Vadim had promptly hooked up with this blond Danish woman, Annette Stroyberg, who would soon bear his firstborn and would, like Bardot, become a star in one of his movies. They weren't married at the time, which somewhat shocked me. I wasn't used to this French "custom" of having babies first and then, perhaps, getting married. Vadim's presence at the table felt predatory, and I was uncomfortable, feeling square, white-bread American. I know from what he later told me that this was just how he saw me. I could never have imagined that one day these people would be a central part of my life.

From time to time Susan would invite me out to dinner with her friends, and occasionally we'd go dancing afterward at l'Éléphant Blanc, a nightclub that was the rage. Several times she was escorted by a man she considered the best dancer she knew, and it was a joy to watch them dip and glide around the dance floor like Astaire and Rogers. I've always had a weakness for people who are beautiful dancers. He was an Italian count in his thirties, a playboy whose family had lost much of its money, making it necessary for him to go to work at an American brokerage firm in Paris. He seemed to know everyone in the Parisian party world and loved to have a good time. So when he asked me out, I accepted. I think because he was a friend of Susan's, I imbued him with qualities he did not possess. Besides, I was lonely and he made me feel I was part of the scene. I wasn't especially attracted to him, but when he asked me to spend the weekend at his country estate, I didn't know how to say no. Phrases like "I am having fun with you, but I have no intention of having an affair with you so I will have to say no to your invitation" never occurred to me. I just went along, whatever he wanted.

What he wanted, besides having an affair, was to take nude photos of me. I find it hard to explain to myself that I didn't think I could say no even though I didn't want to do what he asked. This is painful to write about, but I do so because I want readers—especially women—to know

that even an essentially smart and good girl, if she lacks self-esteem and believes a woman is supposed to "go along," will allow herself to get into some inexplicable situations. I wish I could say this was the last one for me. I had a brief affair with him, every moment of which I hated. Mostly I hated myself for my betrayal of my body, and I felt terrible confusion about why I was letting this happen. The nude pictures he took weren't porn photos by any means; in fact, they were rather arty and demure. I think the kick he got was from the fact that he'd managed to get Henry Fonda's nineteen-year-old daughter to pose nude for him. He wasted no time making sure the story of his wretched conquest made the rounds. Afdera, with her pointy, gossip-ferreting nose, snitched to Dad, and when I went home to New York for Christmas, he had her inform me that I would not be returning to Paris. I was mortified, horrified, and also relieved. I didn't want to go back. I felt my life was spinning out of control.

For the following six months I lived at my father's house in New York. He was doing *Two for the Seesaw* on Broadway and not happy about it. He never mentioned the photos to me, thank God. I think he was too embarrassed, and surely he thought I'd turned into a "bad" girl. But it wasn't that.

I was at a loss as to what to do with my life. I was deeply depressed, sleeping again for twelve or thirteen hours a day, and even then I'd fall asleep on dates, in theaters—a sort of adult-onset narcolepsy. I think part of it was an existential mourning for the lack of meaning in my life, a yearning for the emergence of an authentic self I wasn't sure existed.

Then came the summer, and Dad moved us all to a house on Santa Monica beach, about a mile or so from Ocean House, where Peter and I had spent summers with Susan. It was made clear to me via Afdera that come fall I had to find my own apartment and begin to support myself. I was twenty and it was a reasonable request, but I had no idea what I would do and I was in a panic.

Several years ago José (Goey's Spanish friend, who had become my lover) sent me the letters I wrote him that summer (in French) from Malibu, which reveal something of my state of mind:

*Darling,*

*I'm terribly depressed, don't really see any point in going on; after all, why try to fight when life invariably puts its foot in the door and separates us from the people we love and makes us miserable in so*

*many ways. It's times like these I get so discouraged for no particular reason and I know I will never be very happy or make a success out of life. I don't know what I can do. I'm empty, like a vegetable. Afdera (my father's fourth wife) always uses the same words as my father does: I am a great "disappointment," "lazy," "frivolous," "weak," etc. I don't think I'm as terrible as that, but maybe she's right. I have everything and do nothing. There's a piano and I can't play. There are books in Italian and I cannot read. I cannot draw. I have not "one ounce" of interest, and I'll be like that all my life, I know it!*

And later in the letter:

*Afdera has all but told me she has no intention of staying married to my father, says there's "no future": and thinks he would go well with Lauren Bacall. I agree and think she should leave immediately so Miss Bacall could move in.*

Many young people feel just as I did, hopeless and empty, not knowing what to do with their lives. All of us want to feel we have a purpose that gives our lives meaning. In the absence of that, we blame ourselves and feel like refuse that might just as well be discarded. My alienation took the form of sleeping all the time, bulimia, and deep conventionality. Drugs, acting out, drinking, and driving too fast are escapes other young people turn to in order to feel they actually exist, in the absence of a sense of self.

But long about midsummer, just when all seemed hopeless, a coincidence set me on a path to meaning. You have to be ready for coincidences—as Bill Moyers says, "Coincidences are God's way of remaining anonymous."

## CHAPTER NINE

## TURNING POINT

*Our greatest gift, the closest thing to divinity, is our ability for creation. When you're creating, you start living for something outside yourself and colors vivify and sounds deepen and you feel alive and that is the intoxicating factor in performing.*

—TROY GARITY,  
my actor son

A SUMMER STORM was building to the west as I walked the short distance down Santa Monica beach to his rented house, shoes in hand, jaw set, leaning stalwart into the wind, and telling myself I didn't really care if he accepted me or not. I didn't want to be an actress anyway. All the same, my heart was pounding in my throat when I arrived at his back door, brushed the sand from my feet, and slipped on my high-heeled shoes, chosen carefully to match my dress and flatter my legs.

Taking a deep breath, I knocked at the back door and waited, listening to my pounding heart. Finally the door was opened by a short, bespectacled man with an exceedingly high forehead rimmed with silver hair. In a clipped, nasal voice, without looking at me or introducing himself, as though he had other pressing things awaiting him, he asked me to come in and showed me to a seat in the living room. His accent was unfamiliar, that of a Jewish man of a certain age from New York's Lower East Side, though I didn't recognize it as such at the time. It dawned on me that this was Lee Strasberg, the man I'd come to be interviewed by. He seemed more like a rabbi or a dentist than a famed acting teacher. He was dour, I thought he was angry. I wasn't used to people who didn't

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bother with social niceties, though in time I would come to appreciate this about him: no frills. You could trust him. If he said it, he meant it.

He sat down, looked at me, and said, "Well." The silence that followed was broken only by an odd clicking sound he was making by forcing a quick breath from his throat out his nose. (He would use this tic to great effect in his scene with Al Pacino in *Godfather II*. I was paralyzed as he stared at me, his cold eyes made eerily larger by the thickness of his glasses. Then I felt something deep inside him relax and grow gentle. Perhaps he saw how scared I was. He told me months later that I had seemed shut down, trying so hard to be a proper, conventional young woman. I asked why, then, he had accepted me into his classes, and he said, "It was your eyes. I saw something else in your eyes."

I had gotten to know his daughter, Susan, earlier in the summer. She and her brother, Johnny, who was around Peter's age, and a directorial protégé of Lee's named Marty Fried would come over and hang out at the beach house Dad had rented. Susan Strasberg, with her tiny, perfect face and skin that shone like a magnolia blossom, had created a sensation in the Broadway play *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and earlier that year she had starred opposite my father in Sidney Lumet's film *Stage Struck*. She seemed to me to be wildly confident and mature.

Day after day for more than a month as I played chess with Susan and Marty, I resisted their efforts to get me to join her father's private acting classes. "Why not give it a try?" they'd say over and over. I insisted repeatedly that I didn't want to be an actress, but the problem of what to do in the fall was looming. So in time I reluctantly gave in. I became an actress by default!

Lee Strasberg was associated with the acting style called the Method. It was not really a set of rules but a quintessentially American adaptation of an amalgam of techniques developed by the Moscow Art Theater's director Konstantin Stanislavsky—with ample contributions from Lee himself, who prior to becoming a teacher had been a stage actor and director. In 1949, two years after Elia Kazan, Cheryl Crawford, and Robert Lewis had founded the Actors Studio, Lee was asked to join and soon after became the Studio's artistic director and sole teacher of actors. His students included most of the great actors and actresses of the time: James Dean, Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Anne Bancroft,



Geraldine Page, Al Pacino, Julie Harris, Rip Torn, Ben Gazzara, Sally Field. They brought a new, edgy realism to their work, more internal and personal than the standard theatrical fare audiences were accustomed to. They didn't show; they were.

It was into Lee's private classes that I had been accepted—a step down from the Studio but nonetheless a step into the inner circle of the man who was considered one of the great teachers in this country. It had all come about because Marilyn Monroe was filming *Some Like It Hot* in Hollywood and Lee's wife, Paula Strasberg, was her acting coach. That's what had brought the Strasberg family to Los Angeles, living a few houses down from us on the beach. And that's the coincidence that changed my life.

I remember going with Susan Strasberg to visit her mother on the set of *Some Like It Hot*. I had been on many of my father's movie sets, but this was my first time visiting a set as a young adult, and I was paying close attention. As the heavy padded double doors that led onto sound stages thudded closed behind us and I stepped inside, I felt myself in a foreign land, a dark and secret world, what my son (who is an actor) calls "a civilization within a civilization." A movie set is not an easy place to be if you are not part of the filming. Inevitably you feel like an interloper, left out of the secret that has brought everyone else to this dark, cavernous place with padded walls and a ceiling so high you have to tilt your head all the way back to try to see it. In the center there is a circle of light where all the energy is being sucked, where the secret lies. Thick electric cables snake across the black floor and up into huge boxes on poles, the klieg lights, which, like sentinels with their backs turned, are silhouetted in a glow. Everyone but you has a task connected to that light. People talk in hushed voices that hang, muffled, in front of their faces. They're polite, but you feel an invisible cord drawing them away from you to that place. A siren shrieks. You jump and turn to see a red light swirling above the double doors, like the light on a police car. "Silence!" someone shouts. Then all you hear are murmurs. Then another shout: "Camera rolling!" Then: "Action!" and all sound and energy are sucked into the vacuum of light.

There was an overabundance of tension as well as excitement on the set that day, partly because of the extraordinary assemblage of star power (Marilyn, Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, and the director, Billy Wilder), but also because Marilyn was having problems with her lines

and they had been shooting the same scene many times over. It was a scene early in the movie when she's in the train's sleeping car with Tony and Jack, who are in drag.

Susan Strasberg silently pointed out her mother to me. Paula was sitting in a canvas chair behind the camera, all her attention focused on what was going on inside the circle of light. She was a wide woman. Everything about her was wide—her eyes; her face, with high cheekbones; her body, draped in layers of black, covered by an earth-toned shawl and ethnic jewelry. Hers was a lap and bosom you'd want to be taken into. Thick glasses made her eyes large as an owl's, and her pale red hair was pulled back in a braided chignon. She had clearly been a beauty once, like her daughter, Susan.

An eternity of held breath elapsed before a voice yelled, "Cut!" Suddenly people sprang into action, moving out of the darkness, doing their precise, union-prescribed tasks inside that circle of light. Then into the darkness stepped Marilyn Monroe, bringing the light with her, shimmering, in her hair and on her skin. She walked with Paula toward where Susan and I were standing while someone draped a pink chenille bathrobe over her shoulders to cover her revealing nightgown. Her body seemed to precede her, and it was hard to keep my eyes from camping out there. But when I looked up at her face, I saw a scared, wide-eyed child. I was dizzy. It was hard to believe she was right there in front of me, all golden iridescence, saying hello in that breathy, little-girl voice. There was a vulnerability that radiated from her and allowed me to love her right there and feel glad that she had someone wide and soft, like Paula, to mama her. She was very sweet to Susan and me, but I could tell she wanted Paula's undivided attention, to give her what she needed so that she could go back and do the scene one more time. I wondered how it could be that she seemed so frightened when she was probably the most famous woman in the world. We lingered a few moments, said hello to Billy Wilder, whom I'd known since childhood, and to Jack Lemmon, whom I'd met at this very studio when he filmed scenes for *Mister Roberts* with my father. Then we left, stepping out of the darkness and into the blinding sunlight, into that other civilization that was real life. But for the first time a part of me felt drawn to the light within the darkness behind those heavy padded double doors.

That episode took place just weeks before my meeting with Lee, and

long before the time I myself would be inside the circle of light and would have to find my own ways of dealing with the fears that celebrity cannot assuage.

A few weeks later my father brought me to the Warner Bros. Studio back lot to meet with Jimmy Stewart about the possibility of my playing his daughter in the film *The FBI Story*. Director Mervyn LeRoy had come up with the idea, and I suppose my father saw it as a harmless, all-in-the-family sort of lark, Jimmy being his best friend. For just these reasons, I didn't cotton to it in the least: It smacked too much of a "Daddy's little girl" setup, and I communicated my lack of enthusiasm strongly enough to sweet Jimmy that things never got further than that first meeting. But in light of my subsequent relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, wouldn't it have been ironic if my first role had been in *The FBI Story*?

So Lee Strasberg had accepted me into his private classes in New York, and my problem of what to do in the fall was taken care of. Where exactly to live and how to pay for it all were the remaining issues. As luck would have it, Susan Stein, youngest daughter of MCA's Jules and Doris Stein and sister of Jean (Stein) Vanden Heuvel, had graduated from Vasar and was looking for an apartment and roommate in New York.

Susan Stein suggested that I meet with Eileen Ford, head of the famous Ford Modeling Agency. Maybe I could get work as a fashion model to pay my share of the rent, as well as the acting classes. Within two months of my return to the city I had started Lee's class, taken my first modeling assignments, found a duplex on East Seventy-sixth Street for Susan and me, and moved out of my father's house (to the great relief of Afdera). I was on my way, a leaf in the river's current—not in control of my destiny, perhaps, but at least on the move.

The modeling work I was doing to pay for the acting classes was difficult for me. I didn't like the incessant focus on my looks, and I never felt I was very photogenic (those round cheeks), but I had no trouble finding a doctor to prescribe Dexedrine, which kept me hyper, and diuretics, which made me urinate incessantly, thus draining my body of fluids. On my five-foot-eight-inch frame, my weight dropped from the low 120s to under 110. My face, which in those years (1959, 1960), was prominently featured in many major magazines—*Life*, *Esquire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Look*, *Vogue*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*—looked drawn, my eyes empty. But the modeling work kept coming. I would hang around the

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October  
1959

FUEL FOR THE FLAME BY THE AUTHOR OF ISLAND IN THE SUN  
THE BIBLE AND THE WORLD OF DR. KINSEY

Modeling to pay the rent and for acting classes.  
(October 1959 *Ladies' Home Journal*, courtesy of  
Meredith Corporation, photo by Roger Prigent)

magazine stands when one of my covers had come out, an anonymous bystander, to see how people reacted to my photo. Eileen Ford, whose agency I worked for, once said of me, "She was something. She was terribly insecure about her looks and the impact she had on people. She was astonished to learn that people would be interested in using her and paying her well."

Acting classes were held in a nondescript building in midtown, on Broadway. We'd take a cramped, musty elevator up to the sixth floor to a small theater with a proscenium stage and seats for about forty people. Do you remember the feeling of entering a new school when you were a kid, looking around and picking up clues as to where you fit in and where you were different? Well, it was clear to me from the outset that I was different: I felt uncomfortably upper-class, an elite dilettante, as though I carried a sign that read, "I'm not really sure I want to be here, I'm just trying it out." Everyone else had a scruffier, bohemian look about them that said, "I am an intense, serious New York actor. Deal with it!" My clothes were verging on preppy and my voice, with its Ivy League accent, seemed to come out of my ear. The other students knew I was Henry Fonda's daughter and, whether it was real or imagined, I felt resentment.

There were a few famous faces in the class from time to time—France Nuyen, for instance, who was starring on Broadway in *The World of Suzie Wong*; Salome Jens; Carroll Baker, who was considered a major discovery after her sexy performance in Elia Kazan's *Baby Doll*.

Then there was Marilyn Monroe, Lee's most famous student, who sat quietly and earnestly in the back of the room in a trench coat, a scarf on her head, and no makeup. Twice a week for one month I sat right behind her, trying to understand what was going on, praying Lee wouldn't call on me. I had definitely not committed myself to a career in acting and wasn't at all sure I'd even stay in the class. Marilyn, I was told, had never been able to do a scene there. Each time she'd try, fear would make her sick to her stomach. I remember following her out into the street after class one day. I stood behind her as she hailed a cab, and I watched her ride away unrecognized. I had seen her in newsreels, in the spotlight, being stormed by fans and paparazzi, and had wondered how a person could handle the extreme swing from being the center of fanat-

ical attention to being all alone on a New York sidewalk, unrecognized and scared.

A few years later her press agent (who represented me as well) told me that once Marilyn had been so scared to come down from her hotel room to a press conference that she couldn't stop throwing up. He said she vacillated between thinking she was not just a star but a "celestial body" and the fear that "this is the day they'll find out I'm a fraud." I wish I'd gone to her and held her hand.

The first of the two weekly classes was devoted to what was called a "sense-memory" exercise. One or two students would be called on to recreate the sensations of a particular activity, its smells, feelings, sounds—actually experiencing them. Unlike pantomime, which requires you to mimic an activity exactly but without props, sense-memory involves taking minutes to really feel the heat and weight of a cup of coffee in your hand, for instance, then many more minutes to feel the heat as the cup approaches your lips. It's the difference between reenacting and *reexperiencing*. The purpose is to expand your sensory awareness and concentration. Following the exercise, Lee would do a critique of your work, and then the class could make comments as well.

Next would be the "song" exercise, where the student would stand center stage and belt out a song all on one note, each word drawn out as long as possible. Something about the note being extended on that long breath caused emotions to surface and play across the voice as though it were a harp string. The voice might begin to quaver or crack, faces and bodies would tremble, and Lee would, in his calm, nasal voice, encourage the student to keep going and to relax different parts of the face or body. This exercise was to teach actors how to use focused relaxation to enable them to go on with a scene even when powerful emotions threatened to overcome them.

After that part of the exercise, students would continue the song while flinging themselves about the stage like limp bean bags: jumping, leaping, and swinging their arms.

It was fascinating, but at the time I didn't understand the point of it. I knew that my father felt nothing but disdain for acting classes in general and Strasberg's Method in particular. He didn't believe acting could be taught, and to him the Method was self-indulgent rubbish that allowed untalented actors to feel they were interesting and deep. As I sat there in class, I wondered if maybe he was right. It was all so easy to ridicule.



The second (and last) class of the week was scene day, when students would perform a two-person scene they had chosen, after which Lee would make his comments. I watched actors and actresses I thought were extremely talented, like Lane Bradbury, Ellie Wood, Lou Antonio, and others whose names I don't remember. Many had had small parts off Broadway or on live television shows. Some waited tables; others modeled, like me. I was struck by Lee's ability to home in on whatever it was they needed to work on. Sometimes he was easy on the actors, especially the prettier women. Sometimes he was harsh and impatient. Clearly he'd had some of the students in his classes for years, knew their strengths and weaknesses, and was frustrated when they weren't able to move forward with the work. For me, the most frightening aspect of the class was the thought of being critiqued by Lee in front of the other students. Even worse, he sometimes asked students to comment on the work of their fellow students.

I decided that before I quit the class I should at least try to do a sense-memory, and I chose drinking a glass of fresh orange juice as my exercise. I was still living in my father's house at that point. Early every evening when I'd get home from a photo shoot, I'd squeeze oranges and sit in the library with a glass, focusing as hard as I could on every aspect of the sensory experience.

One day Dad came home, found me working on this, and said, "What the hell are you doing, Jane?"

"Practicing a sense-memory exercise for class," I answered, wincing at what I knew was coming.

He looked at me with pure derision, shook his head, and walked off muttering, "Jesus Christ."

But I persevered. "Persevere" happens to be our family motto.

A whole month and a half after entering his class, I finally told Lee that I was ready to do my first exercise. The following week he called on me. Sitting on a chair center stage, I was as nervous as I'd ever been in my life. It seemed to me there were many more people than usual in the class that day, and I figured they were there to see me fail. But I launched in, placing my fingers around the imaginary glass of chilled orange juice. I closed my eyes and before long felt myself alone in a world of sensation; the nerves in my fingertips felt the cold. I opened my eyes and lifted the glass slowly, testing its weight until I could feel it in my hand, and as I brought the glass to my mouth, the taste buds on my tongue

woke up in anticipation of the sweet, acidic wetness. For the first time I was experiencing something unique to actors: I knew I was on a stage before an audience, pretending—yet at the same time I was all alone and totally in the moment.

What happened next was the most important moment in my life up until then.

Lee was quiet, looking at me. Then in a low voice he said, "I see a lot of people go through here, Jane, but you have real talent."

The top of my head came off, birds flew out, and the room was bathed in light. *Lee Strasberg told me I was talented. He isn't my father or an employee of my father's. He sees actors all day long every day. He didn't have to say this. I know he's not one to "make nice."*

In that moment my life did a flip-flop, though I didn't understand at the time why it had such a powerful effect on me. When I walked outside after the class, the city felt different, as if I now owned a piece of it. I went to bed that night with my heart racing, and when I woke up the next morning, I knew why I was alive, what I wanted to do. There is nothing more exquisite in life than being able to earn your living doing what you love (that, and being capable of love). All I'd needed was for someone who was a professional—and who didn't have to—to tell me I was good.

Characteristically, I went at it full-throttle. Instead of the usual two classes a week that everyone took, I took four. Instead of one scene every few months, I'd do double. I don't think I fully understood the Method, nor do I think I really knew how to apply it in my professional work when that time came. What the classes did for me, however, was provide the confidence I so sorely needed. I knew there'd be those who'd say I'd gotten my breaks because I was Henry Fonda's daughter. At those times I needed to be able to say to myself, *I'm studying hard to develop a modicum of technique. I'm not a dilettante. I don't take this for granted.*

Before Dad ever got to Broadway or starred in a film, he'd played in hundreds of summer stock productions and road shows. They had served as his classes, where he could develop his craft. In the late fifties, when I came along, the business was far more competitive; there were many more actors looking for work, and because I was Henry Fonda's daughter, there was more attention paid to me and fewer opportunities to fumble and make mistakes incognito. For my niece, Bridget Fonda, and now for my son, Troy Garity, the field is even more competitive and challenging. Perhaps you can't teach acting talent, but you can learn the

tools to bring that talent out in the face of what are often challenging circumstances. Dad was wrong to have thought the classes were a mistake—not for me they weren't. Years later, Troy studied acting at New York's American Academy of Dramatic Arts, and he says it saved him just as Lee Strasberg saved me.

As a girl who had grown up denying my feelings, with a father who thought emotions "disgusting," I was unaccustomed to people fully expressing themselves even to the point of looking ridiculous. So the work in Lee's classes was revelatory, a balm to my soul. Sally Field captured what acting did for girls like us who grew up in the fifties when she said, "I guess it was a way for me to release all the feelings that I had in some acceptable terms, so that I wasn't responsible for them." Through acting I could probe new parts of myself—sorrow, anger, joy—and feel safe exposing them. I felt I was appreciated for the fullness of my self rather than for some "good girl's" proper façade. I had never been so happy.

There was another element Lee brought to his classes and to the Actors Studio (for which I auditioned and to which I was accepted the following year), and that was the sense of theater as great art. The Actors Studio had grown out of the Group Theatre to carry on the tradition of actors working together to achieve a high level of truth and reality. Those of us privileged to study with Lee could feel this sense of history and commitment to an ideal, and it was inspiring.

Lee was a voracious reader, and the walls of his spacious but unsumming apartment on Central Park West were ceiling-to-floor books. That apartment became a haven for many of us, a place to sit in the kitchen, drink tea in Russian glass cups, and discuss theater. I was unaccustomed to sitting in kitchens engaged in endless discussion, being asked for and giving opinions. Another stray that seemed to find her place in that culture-laden apartment was Marilyn.

The need for Lee's method of teaching actors seemed very clear to me, and the clearer it became, the more I understood why my father put it down. Musicians use instruments to express themselves through sound. Painters, with time and solitude on their side, use paints and brushes to express themselves on canvas. For actors, their canvas, their instrument, is their *very being*, and for theater actors in particular, instead of in solitude, they are creating before an audience. It's not easy to ensure that your very being is on call, ready, willing, and able to perform to its utmost. The only thing analogous (which I would become con-

scious of later, during all those years of watching Atlanta Braves baseball games with Ted Turner) is the athlete up at bat, say, with the bases loaded at the bottom of the ninth. The world is watching and either he comes through or he doesn't; it's all him up there. There is another critical element the athlete and the actor share: the essential need to be relaxed.

Lee once said, "Tension is the occupational disease of the actor." I have watched carefully the not-quite-great baseball players when they strike out and walk back to the dugout, shaking their heads, swearing, and sometimes pounding their bats on the ground. The great players, on the other hand (I'm thinking particularly of Chipper Jones and Greg Maddux), take that walk as cool as a cucumber, as though nothing had gone wrong. They have found a technique to maintain physical and mental calm. You can't do most things well without being relaxed, not in sports, not in lovemaking, not in acting. Where it differs for actors is that relaxation is needed, not to swing a bat well or run swiftly, but so that the body's energetic flow is unimpeded and inspiration can rise and express itself through the actor's spirit: in eyes, voice, and movement . . . the body as instrument. But it's not as though you can get up in front of an audience and say to yourself, Relax, dammit! You can *pretend* to be relaxed, but pretending isn't going to address self-doubts and hangups, often unconscious, that block the creative process and keep you from doing what you want to do in a scene.

Some actors become famous right away and go from role to role, often being asked to play the same qualities that made them famous, over and over, until they are imitating themselves. In fact, stardom can be the death knell of an actor's best talent. Lee would sometimes say that actors develop their careers in public, but their art develops in private. It is a terrible feeling to be famous but have lost the fire in the belly and not know where it went or why. Something's wrong, but you don't know how to fix it. That's where class comes in. It is in the private sanctuary of a class, not on the job, that an actor can try things, take chances, fall on his or her face, learn how to make his or her instrument perform wholly and fully in all the ways needed, *when* needed. To achieve this goal, we must become conscious of what makes us respond the way we do in real life, in certain relationships and situations. We must confront inhibitions, fears, all of our emotional processes and what triggers them, all the things that can cause us problems without our knowing what is hap-

pening. The techniques Lee used were aimed at enabling the actor to become aware of and remove these internal barriers. He had no rigid set of rules that applied to all actors. On the contrary, he made comments and suggestions based on each actor's individual issues—and one of mine was the need always to be perfect. That made me tense, wanting constantly to prove my talent by being very emotional (something that has always come easily for me). So Lee would have me do scenes where I'd play rather dull, slow-speaking, slow-moving characters. Doing nothing was what I needed to learn.

The other big challenge for an actor is how to find inspiration. You know how some days every nerve in your body is alive and vibrating, while other days you're dull and sluggish? That's not great in civilian life, but if an actor has a critical scene to play (often, in filming, at impossible hours like 6:00 A.M. or midnight) and is "dead" inside, what to do? That's where technique is critical. By working with a variety of exercises, from the sense-memory kind to private moments, and by trying different scenes that you may never be asked to do professionally but that work on the psychic places you tend to block, you can develop an arsenal of tools to use when the need arises.

Of course my father would have hated the Method: It was all about being able to plumb your depths and expose yourself spontaneously on a personal level, especially in class, so as to become conscious of how your instrument functions. He lumped it together with all the other things he disdained: religion, therapy, anything that expressed need, the antithesis of the rugged individual. "Crutches, all crutches!" he would say.

Decades later we were filming a scene in *On Golden Pond* when, standing in the water next to his boat, I tell him I want to be his friend. We had rehearsed many times, and I had stifled the urge to touch his arm, wanting to save it for when it would matter most: his close-up. Dad very rarely had tears on camera, and I wanted him to have tears in this scene, which meant so much to me on a personal level. When the moment came and the camera was rolling for that close-up, I reached out and placed my hand on his arm as I said, "I want to be your friend."

What I saw amazed me: For a millisecond he was caught off guard. He seemed angry, even: *This isn't what we rehearsed*. Then the emotions hit him, tears came to his eyes, then anger again as he tensed up and looked away. All this, though barely visible to the camera, was palpably clear to me, and my heart went out to him. I loved him so much just

then. It amazes me what a great actor he was in spite of his fear of spontaneity and real emotions. I remembered reading something that Leora Dana, who starred with him in the play *Point of No Return*, once said:

*His acting was fantastic. His precision was so perfect it made me want to be perfect. His relaxation was tremendous. I liked that. . . . And then, one day, I touched him at a time when I wasn't supposed to be touching him. I just put my hand on his arm, and instead of that relaxed human being I felt steel. His arm was made up of bands of steel.*

Of course he would hate the Method! But I'd found a home.\*

\*For more information on Lee's theories and practices, read the transcriptions of tape-recorded sessions at the Studio in *Strasberg: At the Actors Studio*, ed. Robert Hethmon, Viking Press, 1965.



## CHAPTER TEN

DOUBLE  
EXPOSURE

*When you're a nobody, the only way to be anybody  
is to be somebody else.*

—ANONYMOUS PATIENT,  
*Your Inner Child of the Past*

IN THE SPRING OF 1959, Josh Logan, after making a screen test with me, decided to put me under contract for \$10,000 a year and launch my career with a movie version of a Broadway play called *Tall Story*, co-starring Anthony Perkins. It was to be shot at the Warner Bros. Studio in Burbank. What fascinated me most on the lot was the wardrobe department—two floors of a building, room after room of costumes from different periods, each tagged with the name of the movie and the star who had worn it. There were the muslin-covered body dummies of all the Warner Bros. stars: stout, thin, buxom, they had been created to the exact measurements of the stars' bodies, ready for the seamstresses to pin their patterns to the forms. The dummies were headless, so if a particular shape intrigued you because of its dramatic curves (Marilyn's) or its petite size (Natalie Wood's), you'd have to ask one of the fifteen or so seamstresses whose it was. In the wardrobe department more than anywhere else, I felt awed in the presence of Hollywood history and realized I was about to step into that history myself. My measurements had been taken before I'd left New York and my dummy was right there next to the others, looking disappointingly straight up and



*With Tony Perkins in  
Tall Story.  
(Photofest)*



*Josh Logan directing Tony Perkins and me in Tall Story.*

down—with none of the eye-catching ins and outs that distinguished so many others.

Then came the day for makeup tests. The Warner Bros. makeup department was run by the highly regarded Gordon Bau. Down the hall I could see Angie Dickinson getting hers done; Sandra Dee was next door. I lay back and presented my face to Mr. Bau, confident that he would make me look like a movie star. When he'd finished I sat up and . . . *Oh, my God! Who is that in the mirror! Is that how he thinks I should look?* I was horrified, dumbstruck. Who was I to tell him I didn't want to be that person in the mirror? But this wasn't me. My lips had a new shape and my eyebrows were dark and enormous, like eagle's wings.

I hated the way I looked but didn't dare say so. Then I was sent to get body makeup, done by a different person (union requirements) in a different room, with (*oh my God!*) mirrors all around. You could see everything. This was turning into a nightmare. A woman asked me to stand on a small platform while she wet a sponge with Sea Breeze and then put pancake body makeup over all the parts of my body that were going to be exposed. Since I was playing a cheerleader, that meant just about everything. To this day the smell of Sea Breeze brings back waves of anxiety. I began to think that this business of making movies wasn't for people like me, who hated our bodies and faces.

The next day, when I saw the results of the costume and makeup tests, I wanted to disappear, so much did I hate how I looked onscreen—my face so round and my makeup so unreal. And I definitely didn't have good hair. To top it off as one of the worst days of my life, word came down from Jack Warner, who had also seen the tests in his private projection room, that I must wear falsies. At the same time that he notified me of Mr. Warner's demand, Josh suggested that after the filming I might consider having my jaw broken and reset and my back teeth pulled to create a more chiseled look, the sunken cheekbones that were the hallmarks of Suzy Parker, the supermodel of the time.

"Of course," said Josh, touching my chin and turning me to profile, "you'll never be a dramatic actress with that nose, too cute for drama."

From that moment on, my experience on the film *Tall Story* became a Kafkaesque nightmare. My bulimia soared out of control and I began sleepwalking again as I had as a child, but in a different context. I would dream I was in bed, waiting for a love scene to be shot, and gradually I would realize that I'd made a terrible mistake. I was in the wrong bed, in

the wrong room, and everyone was waiting for me to start the scene somewhere else, though I didn't know where.

It was summertime and hot, so I often slept nude. On one occasion I woke up on the sidewalk in front of my apartment building: cold, naked, searching in vain for where (and who) I was supposed to be.

I was unable to rediscover the excitement I had experienced acting in Strasberg's classes. I didn't know how to use what I had learned there to make my cheerleader character more than one-dimensional. And the camera felt like my enemy. Standing before it, I felt as though I were falling off a cliff with no net under me. There was so much focus on externals, and there seemed no shortage of people who let me know that my externals could use some improvement—with one exception.

During a day off, I found a plastic surgeon who did reconstructive surgery, and I made an appointment to see him. In his office, I showed him my breasts and told him I needed to have them enlarged. To my amazement (and his credit), he got mad at me.

"You're out of your mind to consider doing such a thing," he said. "Go home and forget about it."

But his validation wasn't enough to put Humpty-Dumpty together again. All the things I feared most in myself—that I was boring, untalented, and plain—came to the fore during the filming of *Tall Story*. When it was done I returned to New York, vowing I would never go back to moviemaking.

I was twenty-two, on my way to celebrity, earning my own living, and independent.

So why, when it was time for me to write about this period for my book, did I develop writer's block that lasted six months? Oh, I had lots of excuses: There was all that thistle to spray at my ranch in New Mexico. There were rocks to move and trees to cut down to make horse trails, and then my kids were visiting. . . . You know, life. But after six months I had to face the fact that I was having difficulty confronting those years following the turning point with Strasberg. Why did the ensuing years feel so sad, so false, after things had started off so well? Not that there weren't happy times, but pain engraves a deeper memory.

Does it seem strange that Strasberg's classes allowed me to discover a place of truth, an authenticity, for the first time since childhood? The

moment when I did my first exercise for him I felt he "saw" me. He was, after all, a master at sensing what was real and at naming it. All my life I had been encouraged *not* to probe my depths, *not* to identify and name my emotions. But Lee encouraged me to dig deep and to come out—and I did, all raw and vulnerable, reborn. Then, *wham!* My career began, and everything that had started to happen with Lee was pushed aside and it all became about hair and big cheeks and small breasts, and I couldn't handle it, coming as it did on the heels of an emerging selfhood. I went into a three-year tailspin of private self-destruction, depression, and passivity. I don't mean this by way of self-pity. There are a lot worse things in life than having your body critiqued, and stardom is a whole lot better than a kick in the ass. But my *Tall Story* experience pushed all my insecurity buttons. I *seemed* to be doing fine. Friends who were with me during that period may be shocked to read what I was really feeling. But then I always *seem* to be fine. I know how to get by.

For one thing, when I returned to New York from Hollywood I was bingeing and purging sometimes eight times a day. It was out of control, and as a consequence I was always tired, angry, and depressed. I briefly sought help from a Freudian psychiatrist, who sat behind me as I lay on a couch, where I was convinced that he was either sleeping or masturbating. I soon realized that talking to the ceiling about my dreams wasn't what I needed. I needed immediate, look-me-in-the-eyes help—first to stop my bingeing and purging, then to help me understand why I was doing it. But I didn't know where to go.

During this period I also developed a fear of men, and my sensuality took a long hiatus. I sought safety in the company of gay or bisexual men. This is also when ballet came into my life. With its rigidly prescribed moves and required slowness, ballet is the dance style of preference for women with eating disorders. Like anorexia and bulimia, ballet is about control. This was a time when women were not supposed to sweat; it was considered unseemly. The health clubs for women that existed featured saunas, vibrating belts that made your fanny wiggle, and other forms of passive exercise. Dumbbells and machines were strictly the domain of men. Consequently ballet was my first experience with hard, sweat-producing exercise that could actually change the shape of my body, and from 1959 until I began the Jane Fonda Workout in 1978, through all those early films, including *Barbarella* and *Klute*, wherever I

was working, whether in France, Italy, the United States, or the USSR—ballet was my sole form of exercise.

Within a month of my return to New York after *Tall Story*, I began rehearsals with Josh for a play he'd purchased called *There Was a Little Girl*, written by Daniel Taradash. It dealt with rape. My father begged me not to do it, fearing that critics would find it too risqué. I saw it as a way to stretch myself beyond what I'd been asked to do in *Tall Story*, and although the script was flawed, it had an interesting, quasi-feminist-before-its-time premise: A young virgin is celebrating her eighteenth birthday with her boyfriend and hoping he will make love to her. He makes it clear he is not ready, they get into a fight, and she runs out into the parking lot, where a man rapes her, aided by a gang of his friends. She returns home in a state of shock and confusion to discover that, while they don't say so overtly, her parents and sister (played wickedly by a fifteen-year-old, Joey Heatherton) assume it must have been her fault—the old you-must-have-wanted-it, blame-the-victim response. Knowing that she had wanted to have sex that night; believing that she may in fact have brought it on herself; and on the verge of a nervous breakdown, the girl goes in search of her rapist, hoping to find out directly from him where the truth lies.

Barely a year had passed since I'd begun to study acting, and a portion of that year had been spent on *Tall Story*. This was my first time in professional theater. It was a highly charged, emotional role, and I was onstage the entire time, making lightning-fast costume changes in the dark on a revolving stage while trying to get into various stages of emotional meltdown. During rehearsals in New York, it became clear to everyone that the play had major flaws, and every morning Dan Taradash would bring in new script changes. I've always liked challenges, but this went a little beyond what I was prepared for.

On New Year's Day 1960, one week before we were to begin out-of-town tryouts in Boston, we received news that Brooke Hayward's mother, Margaret Sullavan, had been found dead in a hotel room in New Haven, an apparent suicide. The news hit me like a punch to the solar plexus. Her death also hit Josh very hard, since their friendship went back to the earliest days of the University Players.

Two nights before our out-of-town opening at the Colonial Theater in Boston, Josh fired my leading man and replaced him with Dean Jones, who barely had time to learn his lines. Two nights later, at the top of the



second act, Louis Jean Heydt, who played my father, died of a massive heart attack right before his entrance. Two nights after that, Josh himself, who unbeknownst to me had long suffered from severe manic depression, had a nervous breakdown and disappeared for more than ten days, leaving us in the hands of the writer, who had never directed in his life.

Our final week of out-of-town tryouts was spent in Philadelphia. Three days in, Josh returned to us as though nothing had happened, though the way in which his wife, Nedda, clung to his side made it plain to me that something was wrong. My hotel room was next to theirs, and one night when I was getting ready for bed, I heard murmuring and decided I wanted to listen in. So I borrowed a trick I'd learned from a boyfriend: If you turn a glass upside down against a wall, it acts like a megaphone and you can hear what's being said on the other side. That first night I was astonished to hear Nedda singing "Rock-a-Bye, Baby" to Josh. I was too frightened of what lay in store for me when we opened in New York to feel compassion for Josh's illness. It only underscored how out on a limb by myself I was. The following night I again used the glass trick to eavesdrop, and this time I heard something that disturbed me far more than the lullaby: Josh was talking to someone about the necessity of keeping the play going for at least twenty-one days no matter how bad the New York reviews were, so that he could declare a tax write-off.

*He knows that the play is going to be crucified, and he cares more about a tax write-off than he does about protecting our professional reputations!*

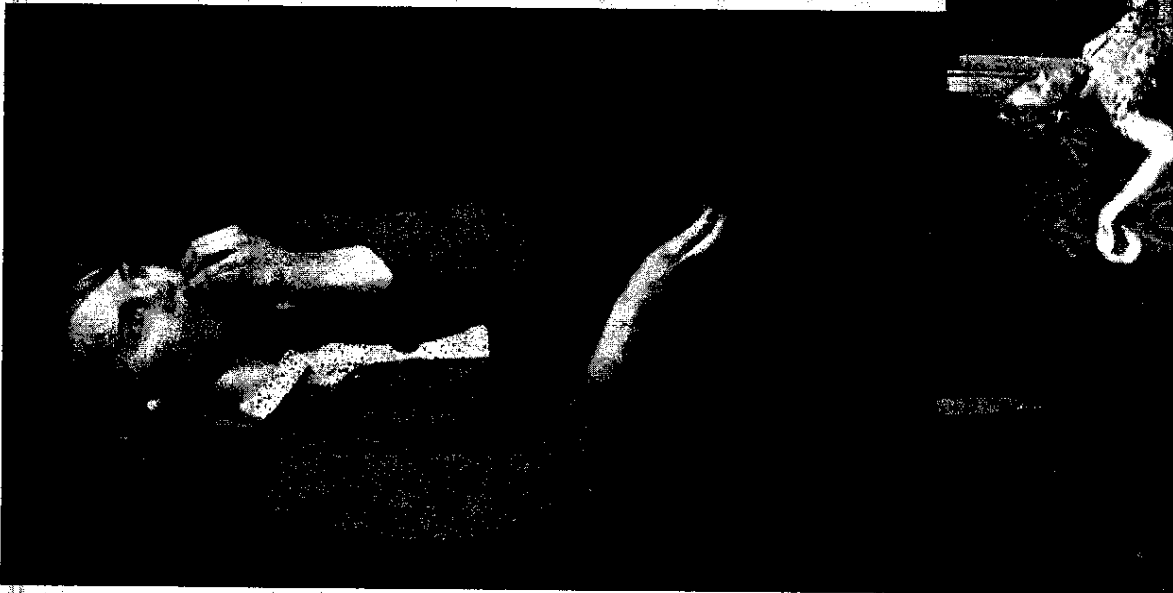
My heart sank. While the Boston and Philadelphia reviews hadn't been encouraging, to say the least, I had personally received some good notices and had, in desperate hope, managed to convince myself that Josh and Dan Taradash would come through with the right script changes. Now I knew they weren't even going to try. *A tax write-off!* What about Lee Strasberg's vision of theater as high art? What about idealism?

*There Was a Little Girl* limped onto Broadway. I got through an embarrassing opening night and learned how to make it through Sardi's without falling apart when reviews are crucifying, though some reviews were good to me. Brooks Atkinson, in *The New York Times*, wrote, "As the wretched heroine of an unsavory melodrama, she gives an alert, many-sided performance that is professionally mature and suggests that she has found a career that suits her." John Chapman, in the *New York Daily*

*In There Was a Little Girl, my first Broadway play. (Leonard McCombe/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images)*



*As Kitty Twist with Laurence Harvey in Walk on the Wild Side. (William Read Woodfield/CPI)*



News, wrote, "With the budding talent that she displayed last evening, she might become the Sarah Bernhardt of 1990. But she'd better find herself a more genuine play than this one between now and then."

The play lasted sixteen performances. Josh got his tax write-off, and I emerged with the New York Drama Critics' Circle award for "the most promising actress of the year for drama."

I felt like a double exposure: There was the me people could see—my mouth opened and closed and words came out. I'll never forget an audition I did for Elia Kazan for the female lead in *Splendor in the Grass*. Kazan, who'd done *On the Waterfront* and *East of Eden*, called me down to the edge of the stage, introduced himself, reached up to shake my hand, and asked, "Do you consider yourself ambitious?" I responded immediately with a resounding, "No!" This passive voice flew automatically out of my mouth, muffling my real passions and creativity. The moment the word left my lips I knew I'd made a mistake, I could read it on Kazan's face. If I wasn't ambitious, I must not have any fire inside. I must be a dilettante. But *good girls aren't supposed to be ambitious*. I went through the motions of an audition but knew I'd already lost out. Natalie Wood got the role, starring opposite Warren Beatty. Neither of them would have hesitated in answering "Yes!" to Kazan's question.

I was utterly disembodied. Even my voice, both professionally and in my personal life, was high in the top of my head. The other, *not* high-voiced, double-exposed me was almost a stranger, someone I was with when I was alone and had nothing to prove, but not someone I could bring to the party. Like an unused muscle, that other me began to atrophy over time so that I almost forgot she was there and was bewildered when someone seemed to see her and expect more from me than I was giving or that I thought myself capable of. Not taking myself seriously, I gave myself away—to films that weren't very good and to people I didn't really care about.

In the fall of 1960, just as I opened in my second Broadway play, Arthur Laurents's *Invitation to a March*, Brooke Hayward's sister, Bridget, was found dead, an apparent suicide, in her New York apartment. The darkness that had overtaken Brooke's golden, laughing family was frightening. It meant that no one was safe; anything could reach in and pluck you from the light.

Around the same time, I discovered that Josh was about to sell my contract to producer Ray Stark for \$250,000. I didn't want to be

"owned" anymore, so I offered to buy back my contract for the same price he was asking from Stark. While \$250,000 may not seem like much in today's show business, for me (back then) it meant having to work constantly just to be able to turn over a chunk of my paychecks to Josh for five years. But I committed to it without hesitation. Freedom was worth it to me.

Though I had vowed never to make another Hollywood film, I now needed to work to pay Josh, and when I was offered the role of Kitty Twist in the movie adaptation of Nelson Algren's dark, Depression-era novel *Walk on the Wild Side*, I grabbed it. It wasn't just for the money, however. I wanted to play the brash, train-hopping, petty thief who had just escaped from reform school and ends up a high-class prostitute in a New Orleans brothel. Kitty was about as far a cry from my role in *Tall Story* as I could get. What's more, there were other stars to take major responsibility for the film's success or failure: Barbara Stanwyck, Laurence Harvey, Anne Baxter, and Capucine.

This time out I had decided to borrow a page from Marilyn Monroe's book and bring an acting coach to Hollywood with me so I wouldn't feel so vulnerable. He was a flamboyant Greek actor and coach named Andréas Voutsinas, and we had gotten to know each other when he helped me with the scene that got me into the Actors Studio. After *Walk on the Wild Side*, he worked with me on the films *Period of Adjustment* and *In the Cool of the Day*, and directed me in a Broadway play, *The Fun Couple*.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# VADIM

*Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.*

—MARK TWAIN

*"Qui ne risque rien n'a rien," observed the devil, lapsing into French, as is his wont.*

—MARY MCCARTHY,  
*Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*

IT WAS 1963, I was in Hollywood filming *Sunday in New York*, my sixth movie, when I got a call from my agent telling me that Roger Vadim wanted me to come to France to do a remake of *La Ronde*, the minor movie classic from the fifties. I had my agent fire back a telegram saying that I "would never work with Vadim!" I had seen his . . . *And God Created Woman*, and—while I found Brigitte Bardot a fascinating force of nature and recognized that the film represented a new, iconoclastic style of filmmaking—I wasn't all that impressed with it. Besides, I remembered feeling endangered when we'd met several years earlier at Maxim's in Paris.

But France seemed to be in the cards, because shortly thereafter French director René Clément flew to Los Angeles to pitch me a film idea that would co-star Alain Delon, one of the top male box-office stars in Europe at the time. I agreed. I liked the idea of putting an ocean's distance between me, Hollywood, and my father's long shadow. Moreover,

*Dad and Peter visiting me on the set of Sunday in New York.*  
(Photofest)

*Paris, 1963.*  
(Everett Collection)





France was then at the apex of the *nouvelle vague*, with young directors like Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, and Malle, and Vadim. Clément was up in years and wasn't part of this new wave, but he had directed the brilliant *Forbidden Games*.

On my second trip to Paris in the fall of 1963, it was love at first sight all over again. But this time the city felt like a friend ready to teach me the art of living rather than a big party from which I was excluded. You'd have thought I was a long-lost daughter coming home, so effusive was the French press. The person who took me under her wing and made me feel at home in Paris was the renowned French actor Simone Signoret: Simone, with her charming lisp, sensual bee-stung lips, and heavy-lidded blue eyes—tough, opinionated, always insisting on being a human first, a star second. She lived with her actor-singer husband, Yves Montand, in an apartment above Restaurant Paul on Ile de la Cité, the little triangle of an island in the Seine right across from my hotel. They were good friends with the director Costa-Gavras, who coincidentally was the assistant director on *Les Félines*, my Clément film. He would later direct the great political thrillers *Z*, *State of Siege*, and *Missing*, and was often there among Simone and Yves's friends when they ordered up meals from Restaurant Paul and talked heatedly into the night. The stimulating, we're-not-in-a-hurry-to-get-anywhere, what-could-be-more-perfect-than-talking atmosphere was reminiscent of the Strassberg home in New York, where both Yves and Simone had often visited. Besides good food and wine, the French love all things cerebral. After all, "I think, therefore I am" was said by French philosopher René Descartes.

I had met Simone in 1959, when she'd accompanied Yves to New York, where his one-man show, *An Evening with Yves Montand*, was a smash hit on Broadway. My father, Aldera, and I had had dinner together with them at the Algonquin Hotel. I remember watching Simone stare adoringly across the table at my father, and now, in Paris, she talked to me about the films he'd made—*Blockade*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Young Mr. Lincoln*, and *12 Angry Men*. She said it was the values those films represented, the quality of the characters he played, that moved her so much, and I began to appreciate him in new ways. While he didn't always bring the qualities she admired home with him, I was old enough now to understand that there are many kinds of needs: Children need loving parents, and people need heroes they can aspire to. Perhaps it's hard to be a hero and a father. For the world, Dad was Tom Joad.

I began to realize that the enthusiasm with which France embraced me wasn't only because I was an American actress, or even because I was the daughter of an American movie star, but because I was the child of *Henry Fonda*, who embodied the best of America to them—the same America President Kennedy represented. I had come to France hoping to shed the "father's daughter" identity, only to discover that there was a lot of his identity I was proud of and wanted to be associated with.

Until coming to France, I had never been exposed to people who took an intellectual approach to filmmaking, nor had I really appreciated the effect American films had on European filmmakers, from the physical antics of Jerry Lewis's comedies to the works of John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, and Preston Sturges.

It was in France that I made an acquaintance with small-c communism, and since over the years I have been accused of being a Communist by those who want to discredit me, I want to say something about this. As I got to know Simone and Yves, I learned that they were among France's intellectual Left, which included the other Simone (de Beauvoir), and her longtime companion, Jean-Paul Sartre, and of course Albert Camus, who had died in 1960. All of them were *engagé*, committed to activism, and in sympathy with the French Communist Party (PCF)—some joining it, then leaving; others never actually becoming party members. Simone and Yves had never joined, although they agreed with many of the party's opinions. What they and other French artists abhorred was the party's doctrinaire cultural policies, which held that artistic freedom was a petit bourgeois crime. Still, there was a long history of close ties between the French intellectual and artistic community and the PCF. They viewed the PCF as the party of change, and since the time of the French Revolution, when they had played a powerful role in toppling the monarchy, French intellectuals had always seen themselves as agents of progressive social change. They also tended to be distrustful of NATO, nuclear armament, and the new war that the United States was pretending not to be involved with—in Vietnam. Many of the French intelligentsia had been at the forefront of the movement against their own country's colonial war in Vietnam, had been active in the underground Resistance during the Nazi occupation of France, and had seen the Communist Party as the only viable way to counteract Fascism.

Having grown up with our two-party system in America, I was stunned as I learned about the many French political parties, some large

and powerful, some small, many coming into being in response to a particular crisis and then disappearing or morphing into some new party. The Communist Party was one among about six other legal political parties represented in the French parliament. I remember reading somewhere that during the time I lived in France, in the fifties and sixties, nearly 40 percent of the French people voted Communist. Communists were simply part of the complex French scene and didn't seem especially threatening. I was not politically active then and especially not interested in theory or ideology (still not, to this day), and no one suggested I should be; no one proselytized. But I think this long, up-close-and-personal (nontoxic) brush with European communism is why, later, when I did become *engagé*, as Simone called it, I didn't view it with the same phobic dread as did many other Americans. As I saw it, when given a choice, people tended to keep a balance between a free market capitalist system and one that had more centralized control—"choice" being the operative word.

Oddly enough, living in Paris, I felt more American than ever before. I needed to get outside my own country to fully appreciate how different we are and what it means to be a citizen of the United States. In France (and, as I later realized, in other European countries) class differences are more entrenched. There is a marked difference between the bourgeoisie, the aristocracy, and the proletariat (working class), and rarely do class lines get crossed. Birth is destiny. In the United States there is more class fluidity, which was especially true in the 1950s. While today in America a growing U.S. hereditary elite and severe economic disparities make it less likely, it was more or less taken for granted back then that a person from a modest background could compose his or her own life scenario, at least given good health, an encouraging parent, an education, and a little luck. This fluidity, which exists alongside our unique political stability, is I think what makes for our particular energy and optimism. Would that all Americans could have had the opportunity to look back at their country from across the ocean in the early 1960s.

It was a magical time to be an American in France. During the Eisenhower presidency, the French had thought of us as gauche, too loud, too styleless: "ugly Americans." Now, with Kennedy and Jackie in the White House, everything seemed to have changed. The Kennedys

brought us international esteem, and the Americans in Paris benefited from their popularity.

On November 22, I walked into the lobby of my hotel after a day's shooting on the Clément movie. Standing at the reception desk, telephone to his ear, was American actor Keir Dullea. His face was ashen. "Kennedy's been shot, they think he's dead," he told me. We stared at each other. I sat in the lobby, stunned, waiting to hear more news. A journalist came in to interview me for the French film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* and asked if I wanted to cancel. "No," I said. "I need to talk."

We went up to my hotel room, and after making a desultory attempt at conducting an interview, we both broke down.

Simone called. She was crying and said that I shouldn't be alone on this night, that she wanted me to come over to their place. Sitting with Simone, Yves, and their friends that night, I realized that they mourned the loss of Kennedy as their own and shared a sense of terrible, unbelievable finality. For me a bubble had burst. The institutional world I grew up believing in was no longer stable. And it would get worse: The losses of Bobby and Martin were still to come.

I had come to France for work, yet I had been drawn there for more personal reasons. Maybe here I could begin to hear the sounds of my own voice, try to find out who I was, or at the very least find a more interesting persona than the one I inevitably slipped into back home.

I would end up staying in France six years. And at the hands of a man who was a master at polishing a woman's persona, I would start down a new path—as a female impersonator.

Our arms were linked as we solemnly followed his casket through the narrow, ochre-tinted streets of old Saint Tropez—Brigitte Bardot, Annette Stroyberg, Catherine Schneider, Marie-Christine Barrault, and me. Of all Vadim's wives and companions, only Catherine Deneuve and Ann Biderman were missing. Our thirty-one-year-old daughter, Vanessa Vadim, carrying her infant son, Malcolm, and her half brother, Vania (Vadim's son with Catherine Schneider), walked just in front of us. The streets were lined ten deep with fans, old friends, and onlookers who had come to pay their respects. It was two months into the new millennium.

The services in the small Episcopal church had been arranged by Catherine Schneider, whom he'd married after me. A Scottish minister, in a thick brogue, solemnly gave the sermon in French. An odd amalgam it was. Vadim's widow Marie-Christine Barrault, niece of fabled French actor Jean-Louis Barrault and the star of such films as *Cousin, Cousine*, was speaking of Vadim with the theatrics of high Greek tragedy when she was loudly interrupted by an unusually long fart, issuing forth from grandson Malcolm, bringing laughter to the assembled crowd, something Vadim would have appreciated. He was never one to shun laughter, especially if it meant interrupting a solemn occasion.

As we exited the church, we were surprised by three Russian violinists, in full costume, who began playing soulful Slavic music as they took their places behind the coffin. Brigitte had arranged this on her own as a surprise. I loved her for wanting to acknowledge Vadim's Russianness on this day, in this way. We broke off sprigs of mimosa along the route to the cemetery and laid them on his coffin as we walked past to say our good-byes.

Vadim and I had spent many happy times together in Saint Tropez, and whenever we'd pull his fancy Chris-Craft into the harbor after a day of island picnicking or water-skiing, we'd look up to see this historic old cemetery, the one Vanessa referred to as the "dead people's village," perched on the edge of the cliff. Once, at about age five, Vanessa was walking with her dad on the road that ran just above the cemetery. She stopped and looked at the tall, lichen-covered grave markers and began asking questions about death and survival of the soul. Vadim wrote in his autobiography *Memoirs of the Devil*:

*She thought on the whole that there was probably some kind of existence after death, but was afraid there might not be any sensible place where we could arrange to meet each other. Her face clouded over, and a few silent tears ran down her cheeks. Then, all of a sudden, her expression brightened.*

*"We shall just have to die at the same time," she said.*

*It is a very difficult promise to keep, but I gave my word I would live till I was very, very old so that I would wait for her.*

The two of them always had a profound relationship. He died with Vanessa lying beside him, her head on his chest. He lived long enough to



*At Vadim's funeral: Brigitte Bardot, Annette Stroyberg, me, Catherine Schneider, and Marie-Christine Barrault in the foreground, out of focus.  
(Nebinger/Niviere/Hadji/Niko/ SIPA Press)*



see her grown into a remarkable woman and to know her little son, whom he referred to as Buddha.

When the funeral was over we drove to Catherine Schneider's home and drank together and talked and laughed, thinking how very Vadim-esque it all was, all of us women together as friends, reminiscing about why we'd loved him. What we did *not* discuss that day were the reasons all of us had left him. In rereading Vadim's book *Bardot, Deneuve, Fonda*, I came upon something Catherine Deneuve said in an interview that may have been closer to the truth: "I wonder if it's not he who left [us]. You know, you can leave someone by doing everything to make them leave you."

His full name was Roger Vadim Plemiannikov, and for years my passport listed me as "Jane Fonda Plemiannikov." *Plemiannikov* means "nephew," and the family is said to be descended from the nephews of the great Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan. That explains the exotic eyes that my daughter and grandson have inherited. In France, families must give their children an officially approved first name; hence "Roger" was tacked on, but everyone who knew him called him Vadim.

His formative years were spent during the Nazi occupation, and that must have had a profound impact on his character. In *Bardot, Deneuve, Fonda*, he wrote of the political hypocrisy he witnessed, the priests collaborating with the enemy, as well as acts of heroism:

*At sixteen, I had established a rule for myself: I was going to take the best from life. Its pleasures. The sea, nature, sports, Ferraris, friends and pals, art, nights of intoxication, the beauty of women, insolence and nose-thumbing at society. I kept my ideas on politics (I'm a liberal who is allergic to the words "fanaticism" and "intolerance"), but refused commitment in any form. I believed in man the individual, but had lost my faith in mankind at large.*

As a young man he would work off and on as an assistant to film director Marc Allégret, writing scripts but essentially eschewing steady work. In *Memoirs of the Devil*, he wrote: "We rejected all occupations which would have deprived us of our liberty. . . ."

Liberty for him then meant being free for lovemaking, hanging out in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where his acquaintances included André Gide, Jean Genet, Salvador Dalí, Edith Piaf, Jean Cocteau, Albert Camus, and Henry Miller. For a while he shared a mistress with Hemingway and would read aloud to French novelist Colette in her apartment on the rue de Beaujolais.

Vadim was always loyal and generous to his friends. If he had any money, he'd share it without hesitation, even if he was pinched himself. If he had a woman who was up for it, he'd share *her* as well.

After he and Brigitte, his first wife, had broken up and she was having an affair with Jean-Louis Trintignant, her co-star from . . . *And God Created Woman*, Vadim stood outside the apartment they had shared, and was overcome by a jealousy so powerful it was almost suicidal. When he recovered, he vowed never to allow "this unknown demon [jealousy] to take possession of my body and soul again. I became immune to the virus forever." However, he also writes revealingly, "What you think you have buried lives on in you, feeding on you silently. Gnawing away. It is just that you do not realize it." I think of the pain my father felt as he stood beneath Margaret Sullivan's window while she made love to Jed Harris, and I think Vadim was right: You can appear to quash feelings of rage and jealousy, but those unacknowledged emotions can continue to play havoc with your heart, all the more so because they are unacknowledged.

Vadim abhorred jealousy, considering it petty, bourgeois, unworthy of him or of anyone he was with. As our marriage floundered, I often wished that he would fight harder to save it; demonstrate more concern—even including jealousy. Instead he would become almost passive, as if knowing that the ending had been fated long before—a stance I read as not caring. In *Bardot, Deneuve, Fonda*, Bardot is quoted as saying of their marriage (in an interview): "If only Vadim had been jealous, things might have worked out." People need to be wanted, and want to be needed.

I could write one version of my marriage to Vadim in which he would come across as a cruel, misogynistic, irresponsible wastrel. I could also

write him as the most charming, lyrical, poetic, tender of men. Both versions would be true.

It was a month after Kennedy's assassination, December 21, my birthday, that Vadim reappeared on my horizon. He'd been invited to a party given for me by my French agent, Olga Horstig. We found ourselves sitting together most of the evening, talking. He wasn't at all as I had I remembered. He seemed funny and sweet in an offbeat, old-shoe kind of way. I've found that when you have a diabolical image of someone and he or she turns out to be a regular mortal, you then tend to elevate that person to an unrealistic place of perfection. Dangerous, that. A clear-eyed, balanced perspective is always the safest. As the evening wore on, he sang ribald French marching songs from the French-Algerian war and mispronounced English with irresistible charm. For example:

"Oh, Jane, you can't tell me alcoholeesm is harry-di-tarry" (hereditary). "This chair is getting a leetle un-con-fort-eeble" (uncomfortable). "I see no ob-stee-cles" (obstacles . . . as in no obstacles to taking me home).

Okay, so you don't see that as especially charming? Ah, but you weren't looking into green, slanted eyes above high Slavic cheekbones, eyes that seemed filled with mystery and promise. My God, he was handsome. Not in some perfect way—his teeth were too big, face too long—but the way the whole came together was startlingly attractive. Besides, except for being tall, dark, and very slender, he didn't seem at all like my father.

The next encounter would be the deciding one. He had a meeting with his talented production designer Jean André at Studios Eclair, where we were filming with Delon. Word reached me that he was in the canteen, and as soon as we had a break, I ran straight from the scene to see him—scantly dressed in a teddy covered only by a trench coat, which managed to fly open as I entered the canteen, breathless, flushed, and clearly excited. That's what he needed, to see my excitement at seeing him. I was a fairly naïve, inexperienced twenty-six-year-old. He was ten years older, and a lot of water had flowed under his bridge.

When filming had wrapped for the day, he took me back to my hotel room and we began to make out passionately on the couch, but when we finally made it to the bed he was no longer aroused. I remember thinking

it was my fault and feeling humiliated, but I didn't let on because I didn't want him to feel bad. Here was Vadim, renowned lover, unable to make it with me. Now I knew for sure there was something really wrong with me.

The situation went on for *three weeks*, with me feeling terrible, wanting to die, but I never let him know how I felt, because I didn't want to make matters worse. It never occurred to me to break it off. That would have been conceding defeat. *Make it better! I know I can make it better!* The fact that he was impotent for that first period of our relationship, rather than turning me away, actually reassured me: He wasn't a superman, he was vulnerable, human.

When finally the curse was broken, we stayed in bed for two nights and a day and were together from then until I had to return to the States to promote *Sunday in New York*. Everything else in life seemed to come to a standstill. I ceased eating except for the crusts of his bread and the rinds of his Camembert. Every afternoon when I wasn't working, we would make love. Then I'd kiss him good-bye, and he would excuse himself to be with his three-year-old daughter, Nathalie, then living with her mother, Annette Stroyberg.

His lovemaking was imaginative, erotic, and tender. Though I couldn't understand all that he said (or maybe *because* I couldn't understand), his murmurings sounded to me like messages from some new planet. But what I found as irresistible about him as the sex was his attachment to his little daughter. *He must be a good man to love his daughter that way.*

There's no doubt that part of my attraction to him and his life was because it was so different from the repressed style in which I had been raised. Then there was a certain remote dignity about his person that belied his reputation. But what a reputation he had! In the first years of our relationship, walking down the Champs-Élysées, people would react to him as to a major movie star. I was also intrigued by his worldliness: He'd been through war, had risked his life, knew so many interesting people, and was so different from any man I'd known. He would wake up in the morning singing!

It was normal, I suppose, to pay no heed to the fact that we spent an inordinate amount of time in a club he belonged to, where we would drink and he'd go off to a side room to bet on a miniature electric car race, or that we were always driven by a chauffeur. Not even later, when he explained that he'd had his driver's license revoked for a year for hav-

ing an accident while driving under the influence, did I think: Wait a minute. Nor did I make the connection later, when he told me that at the time of the accident he'd been driving Catherine Deneuve, who was pregnant with his child and almost miscarried. I paid no heed to the many red flags thrown up over those first months—the drinking, the gambling. Nor did I ask myself later, before committing myself to him “in sickness and in health,” whether our respective weaknesses and strengths would complement one another; whether his vices together with my black-belt co-dependency (put up with everything—make it better) would bring us both grief; whether my emotional underdevelopment could surmount his “charming” addictions. Had I known enough to ask myself those questions, chances are I would have known enough to answer them—or known where to go to find the answers. But I didn't.

It certainly never occurred to me that this was not a man who could teach me intimacy, because I didn't know it was something I needed to learn. You can't look for something you don't know exists. Intimacy has a *feel* to it, and if you've never experienced it, you don't know that you miss it. In fact, if it's never been in your life and then it does come along, there's a chance it will make you feel extremely uncomfortable and that you'll run away from it.

Frankly, if I had it all to do over, knowing then what I know now, I would have plunged in just the same. I probably would have tried to get him to go to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and whatever is offered for compulsive gambling. Being French, he would have refused (only in America do people self-identify as being “in recovery”), and I would have hung in anyway, maybe leaving a year or so sooner. Maybe not. I don't regret any of it. Well, at least not most of it.

I wanted to stay in Paris with Vadim, so—my earlier telegram from California be damned—I agreed to be in his film *La Ronde*. We moved out of my hotel and into a small, romantic walk-up apartment just around the corner, on the rue Seguyer, while he was busy preparing the film. I knew that in addition to three-year-old Nathalie, his daughter with his ex-wife, he had a baby son with twenty-year-old Catherine Deneuve, but I assumed that having babies out of wedlock indicated a laissez-faire relationship, a lack of emotional commitment on both their parts.

So three months after coming to France, for the first time I found

myself living full-out with a man—shopping, keeping house, cooking our meals: all in French (in which I was becoming quite fluent). Fortunately I'm a nester. Unfortunately I couldn't cook, and I also had food issues, which continued without Vadim knowing it.

I began to spend all my time reading cookbooks (food obsessions are not uncommon for people with eating disorders), everything from the old standby *The Joy of Cooking* to *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*, which included a notorious recipe for hash brownies. Never one to do things halfway, I would always attempt the most complicated recipes: Senegalese chicken soup, baked Alaska. This was pre-supermarket France, when shopping for food pretty much still meant going to one store for vegetables, another for fish, others for breads, dairy products, and so on.

For one of our first home-cooked dinners, I decided I'd make minute steaks. I remembered watching Susan cook them when she was married to Dad. Seemed easy enough. About five minutes into the meal, Vadim stopped midbite, looked up bemusedly from his plate, and asked, “Where did you buy this meat?”

“At the butcher,” I replied.

“Was there a horse's head over the door?”

“Actually, come to think of it . . .” Oh, my God, in a flash I realized what I'd done. It was horsemeat! I'd gone and cooked my favorite animal

Then there was the time he announced he'd invited Bardot over for dinner. Yikes! I'd never met her. It was hard enough trying to banish from my mind the knowledge that he'd actually been married to her, held that body in his arms. Now I was going to have to be in *the same room, at the same table, with her!* I roamed the markets till I came upon something that seemed perfect for the occasion: *boudin noir*, blood sausage, big, fat, black, blood sausage. I'd never seen one before, much less cooked one, but it looked appropriately . . . Well, maybe she'd choke on it. Actually we got along fine. She was funny and down-to-earth and seemed to have no hidden agenda. She even complimented me on the meal—it turns out she couldn't cook, either.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

# THE MAGICIAN'S ASSISTANT

*The magician's assistant is easy to spot  
the way her arm curves like a swan's neck as she points  
To a favorite piece of furniture for our inspection and approval,*

*The way her smile charms us into believing,  
Disarming whatever might otherwise cut her in half.  
Where does a magician find his assistant,*

*Such a beautiful woman (though we hardly notice her!)  
who will smile at his side and give nothing away?  
We assume she knows, of course, and imagine*

*that behind her perfect teeth, her mind is haunted by the knowledge  
of another, secret kingdom where a dove crouches  
next to the heart-hammering hare in a dark warren, waiting*

*To be abracadabred back to the dovecote, to lapin reality.  
In that country of lifted wallets, colorfully endless handkerchiefs  
and torn one-hundred-dollar bills that heal themselves,  
women, cut in half, seem to dwell mindlessly under a spell,  
play games with a marked deck or recline in utter weightlessness,  
suspended only by our wish to believe in them.*

—CHARLES DARLING,  
"On Being Introduced at a Neighborhood Party  
to a Magician's Assistant"

THE FILMING OF *La Ronde* (retitled *Circle of Love* in the United States) with Vadim was a happy time for us both. I loved the joining of our creative forces, and I discovered tremendous sexual excitement in having him place me in the positions he wanted, calling the shots—and in my exceeding his expectations. I have always liked being directed, not having to make the big decisions but having parameters set for me and then infusing life into the director's vision.

For an American I had a good accent, which meant people thought I was Swedish! In some ways speaking French acted as a mask for me, allowing me to be freer than I was in English. It slowed me down, softened me, and made my voice deeper and more nuanced.

Vadim's ex-wife, Annette, was in Morocco at this time, and three-year-old Nathalie had come to live with us. Remembering how important Susan had been in my life, I wanted to be as responsible as I could toward the little girl whom I had just started to know.

Our apartment on the rue Seguer was too small for Vadim, me, Nathalie, and her nanny. Lacking the money to rent a larger apartment, Vadim prevailed on his old friend Commander Paul-Louis Weiller, who had turned one of his many houses, the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs de Hollande, into a haven for friends and artists (and beautiful young women, for whom the old man had a penchant). Weiller gave us an apartment there. The hotel, a magnificent historic monument built in the sixteenth century, is on the rue Vieille-du-Temple, in Le Marais, one of the oldest sections of Paris. I was fortunate to have lived there at that time, before it became chic and recherché.

The rue Vieille-du-Temple, old, narrow, and cobblestoned, was lined by buildings so ancient that they leaned in toward each other like friends longing to touch. We lived in the attic—vaulted rooms where walls and ceilings were covered with maps of the world painted by sixteenth-century artists. Our bedroom window was directly opposite a school for cantors, and as we were at the top of the two leaning buildings, it was as though the singers were right in bed with us. On the first floor, Roland Petit, director of the Ballets de Paris, and his wife, prima ballerina Renée Jeanmaire, made their abode. There was an apartment reserved for Charlie Chaplin, though I don't remember ever seeing him

there. This exotic atelier is where we made our home for several years and created a family.

Vadim wrote extensively about how, later, I spoke of having been "turned into a domestic slave" by him, as though this were a betrayal of womankind. I will admit to having made some pretty extremist rhetorical statements during that period, but I doubt it was the domesticity I was objecting to. I have, in fact, always liked creating a home. My physical surroundings are very important to me. I can't think straight if my surroundings are disorderly or dirty, and during times when we couldn't afford to have someone help out, I did the housework myself rather than live with the mess. During the years with Vadim it never crossed my mind to ask him to help with household chores. I saw it as women's work, even though it meant doing double duty, since I often left home for the studios before dawn and returned after dark, while he stayed home and wrote—or went fishing.

This acquiescence was, in part, due to the way we were all conditioned, and partly because I felt that being the perfect, unselfish housewife would make it impossible for him to leave me—just as my mother had thought about Dad. Interesting how we interpret the radical notion of bringing democracy into the home as selfishness! It wasn't that Vadim was mean or wanted to make my life hard. It's just that he didn't notice. He could live with dirty dishes stacked high in the sink for weeks. Now that I think of it, maybe *that* was what I railed about—his not noticing.

But there were other, more complicated problems that are much harder to write about. Vadim had created a view of life for himself, a view shared by all his friends, which held that any show of thrift, jealousy, or desire for organization and structure was a sign that you were bourgeois. God forbid! "Bourgeois" became the dreaded epithet, as horrifying as betrayal or dishonesty. There were even times when it was suggested that the French Communist Party had bourgeois tendencies.

I had inherited \$150,000 from my mother. At the time, it was a nice sum, something I could fall back on if I stewarded it carefully. Vadim could not comprehend why I hesitated to give him large portions of it so that he could hire a friend to come with us to some vacation spot and work with him on a script. At first I was horrified and said so. But over time I began to feel that I was being petty and stingy. So I gave in. Only years later did I realize that Vadim was a compulsive gambler, that the vacations for his films or vacations were often chosen for their proximity to



*Vadim directing me in La Ronde.*

a racetrack or casino. I had no idea that gambling was an addictive disease, as difficult to overcome as alcoholism, anorexia, and bulimia. Much of my mother's inheritance was simply gambled away.

Along with thriftiness, jealousy was a major no-no. Why did women make so much fuss about the physical act of intercourse? Just because a husband or wife (though it always seemed to be the husband) had sex with someone else, that didn't represent betrayal—"It's *you* I love." Vadim would go on and on with his friends about how the sexual revolution of the sixties showed that people were finally beginning to see what they had always known: that middle-class morality needed to be discarded for sexual freedom and open marriage. (We weren't married . . . too bourgeois!) Maybe he'd smelled it on my skin when we'd first met—that I was malleable and insecure in my sexuality. In any event, I was vulnerable to him and felt that in order to keep him and be a good wife, I had to prove that I was, in fact, the queen of "nonbourgeoisness," the Oscar winner of wildness, generosity, and forgiveness.

As time went on, Vadim would fail to come home in the evenings. I'd have dinner ready and he wouldn't show. Often he wouldn't even call. I would usually eat all the food I'd prepared for us, go out and buy pastries and French glacé (not nearly as satisfying as our ice cream), devour all of it, throw it all up, and collapse into bed exhausted and angry. Sometimes he'd come home around midnight and fall into bed drunk. Sometimes he wouldn't show up till morning. I swallowed my anger (along with the ice cream), never really confronting him about this behavior. I didn't want to seem bourgeois. I didn't think I deserved better.

Then one night he brought home a beautiful red-haired woman and took her into our bed with me. She was a high-class call girl employed by the well-known Madame Claude. It never occurred to me to object. I took my cues from him and threw myself into the threesome with the skill and enthusiasm of the actress that I am. If this was what he wanted, this was what I would give him—in spades. As feminist poet Robin Morgan wrote in *Saturday's Child* on the subject of threesomes, "If I was facing the avant-garde version of keeping up with the Joneses, by god I'd show 'em."

Sometimes there were three of us, sometimes more. Sometimes it was even I who did the soliciting. So adept was I at burying my real feelings and compartmentalizing myself that I eventually had myself convinced I enjoyed it.

I'll tell you what I did enjoy: the mornings after, when Vadim was gone and the woman and I would linger over our coffee and talk. For me it was a way to bring some humanity to the relationship, an antidote to objectification. I would ask her about herself, trying to understand her history and why she had agreed to share our bed (questions I never asked myself!) and, in the case of the call girls, what had brought her to make those choices. I was shocked by the cruelty and abuse many had suffered, saw how abuse had made them feel that sex was the only commodity they had to offer. But many were smart and could have succeeded in other careers. The hours spent with those women informed my later Oscar-winning performance of the call girl Bree Daniel in *Klute*. Many of those women have since died from drug overdose or suicide. A few went on to marry high-level corporate leaders; some married into nobility. One, who remains a friend, recently told me that Vadim was jealous of her friendship with me, that he had said to her once, "You think Jane's smart, but she's not, she's dumb." Vadim often felt a need to denigrate my intelligence, as if it would take up his space. I would think that a man would *want* people to know he was married to a smart woman—unless he was insecure about his own intelligence. Or unless he didn't really love her.

As with my eating disorders, I believed I was the only one who betrayed myself by allowing other women into my bed when I didn't really want to, especially when there was no mitigating financial need. (I know many women who have no money and no job skills who do lots of things they don't want to do in order to keep their support, especially if they have children.) Then in 2001 I read *Saturday's Child*, the autobiography of Robin Morgan, cornerstone of the contemporary feminist movement, inventor of the feminist symbol, and editor of *Sisterhood Is Powerful* and its two sequels, *Sisterhood Is Global* and *Sisterhood Is Forever*. In her autobiography she writes of her own self-betrayal within marriage. She describes how she

*bought into every sexual myth the guys could fling at me—about Bloomsbury, sexual liberation, not being a puritan; about keep-on-doing-what-you-don't-like-because-the-more-you-do-it-the-more-you'll-like-it; about D. H. Lawrence's ideal quartet (two women, two men, all possible sexual permutations). I never questioned whose needs and self-interest these models served. . . .*



*I partly dissociated my consciousness in order to survive them, an attempt to compartmentalize and contain the experience of violation.*

Until then I had not planned on writing about my own experiences. I thought: There are enough people who dislike me. I don't need to give them even more ammunition. But when I read Robin's book, it gave me courage to see that a woman like her had had these experiences and written about them, bravely and without salaciousness. I saw that if the telling of my life's journey was to matter to other women and to girls, I would, like Robin, have to be honest about how far I've come and the meaning of where I've been.

I got Robin's e-mail address from Gloria Steinem, a friend, and wrote to her, telling her how important her honesty had been to me. I asked, "How is it that otherwise strong, independent women can do these things?" She answered: "You'd be surprised how many 'otherwise strong, independent women' have done these things."

In my public life, I am a strong, can-do woman. How is it, then, that behind closed doors, in my most intimate relations, I could voluntarily betray myself? The answer is this: If a woman has become disembodied from a lack of self-worth—I'm *not good enough*—or from abuse, she will neglect her own voice of desire and hear only the man's. This requires, as Robin Morgan says, compartmentalizing—disconnecting head and heart, body and soul. Overlay her silence with a man's sense of entitlement and inability (or unwillingness) to read his partner's subtle body signals, and you have the makings of a very angry woman, who will stuff her anger for the same reasons she silences her sexual voice.

Vadim was the first man I had ever loved, and in spite of the complexities (and in some part because of them), the love was real enough that for a long time my anger was only a background whisper. I loved that he was like a kaleidoscope and I could see the world through all his different prisms. He helped me rediscover my sexuality (and that of other women in the process), gave me an if-he-loves-me-I-must-be-okay kind of confidence, and helped move me out from under my father's shadow. I had a persona now. I was with a "real man." I ran his house, was a good step-mother to his daughter and to his son, Christian, when Catherine

Deneuve agreed to let him visit us. Vadim's friends seemed to like me. What wasn't to like? I never complained, rarely scolded, worked hard, brought in the money, brought them their whiskeys at night, and made them their breakfast in the morning when they were hungover, and they knew I participated with Vadim in his sexual libertinism. I remember one of the group remarking, as I was leaving with a tray of glasses to be refilled, "Jane is something else, not like most women, more like one of us." I fairly purred with pleasure, as I had at age ten when someone had asked if I was a boy or a girl.

Unlike the magician's assistant in the poem at the start of this chapter, my functioning self did not know what was real, that there was another way to be, a "secret kingdom" of the embodied self that I could be. Abracadabred to, authentic and whole. I had long since abandoned that self. I so needed to *not* know, in order to remain in the relationship. I transformed myself with Vadim's magic wand into the perfect sixties wife. I didn't need his money, so it wasn't an economic issue. It was the fear of losing the relationship, since it was the relationship that validated me. If someone had asked me to describe who I was then, I would have had a difficult time of it. But as film critic Philip Lopate once wrote: "Where identity is not fixed, performance becomes a floating anchor." And could I perform! Making the unreal seem real, the sad seem happy, hoping that somewhere along the way it would all work out, that I would discover who I was. Meantime I had an anchor.

I would often talk to Vadim about my insecurities, but he didn't really understand, though he tried in his own way to give me confidence. The problem was, he knew how to validate only my façade, and the façade worked so well that there seemed no pressing need to go deeper. "Deeper" might have meant my becoming more assertive, more opinionated, more who I was, and as Vadim said publicly (later, after I'd left him and become more . . . me), he liked his women "softer." At that time, if it was soft he wanted, I'd give him squooshy.

I made a list one day of what I considered my main faults: selfishness, stinginess, and being too judgmental were the top three. Then and there I decided that if I pretended to be generous and forgiving for a long enough time, maybe I would become those things. I remembered reading Aristotle in philosophy class at Vassar: "We become just by performing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions, brave by performing brave actions." I had always felt that you become what you do—

which is one reason I fretted so when I was asked to play silly young women like my characters in *Tall Story* and *Any Wednesday*. If you behave one-dimensionally day after day, you start to become one-dimensional, and after a while the ability to reach deeper becomes atrophied.

You could say that Vadim majored in vacations. His love of certain natural environments and talent for enjoying them was unbounded, and I was a beneficiary. He loved the sea and its shores. We would go not just to glamorous Saint Tropez, but to the rugged coast of Brittany on the Atlantic in the northern region of France and to the Bay of Arcachon on the southern Atlantic coast. We would pile into an outboard motorboat with Nathalie, Christian, and *grande* Nathalie (daughter of Vadim's sister, Helene) and go for picnics on some of the sand dunes that would emerge at low tide. *Grande* Nathalie was almost ten years older than *petite* Nathalie and often accompanied us on our vacations.

*Petite* Nathalie was growing into a beautiful combination of her Danish mother and Franco-Slavic father, the same exotic eyes and dark hair, with legs that went on forever. She was a challenging child. Her stubbornness and moodiness were evident; she kept her deeper self tucked away, and I never really knew what she felt—except for her love for her father. She and I were always battling over issues like brushing her teeth and doing her lessons, and I suspected she thought I was a nag. (Forty years later, she remains a member of my family.)

Often Vadim and I would go to Saint Tropez in the winter, my favorite time there. We'd stay in a small, not fancy hotel/restaurant called Tahiti Hôtel, right on Pampelonne Beach, the one that became famous for its nude sunbathers in summertime (which is one reason I preferred winter). I loved the Mediterranean storms—the mistrais—that would bend the palm trees and send waves high onto the beach. Vadim and I would sit by a cozy fire, playing chess and watching nature rage.

Next to the sea, Vadim loved mountains best. He was an excellent skier and we often spent Christmas in Megève or Chamonix, two ski resorts in the French Alps. But just as I preferred Saint Tropez in the winter, I loved most when we would go to Chamonix in the summer. We'd always drive from Paris to the mountains with Nathalie, singing French songs and playing road games. We would rent a chalet in the little town of Argentière, adjacent to Chamonix, in the valley of the Mont Blanc.

*Beached in Arcachon, France, with Nathalie (in the boat with me) and Christian watching.*



*Vadim and me in Baja California on one of our many deer-sea-fishina trins.*



It would be sunny, the air pure and brisk, the wildflowers just emerging. The sparkling, majestic Alps rose sharply on both sides of the valley, with Mont Blanc to the south lordling it over them all. From time to time, an awesome rumble would echo down the valley as melting snow avalanched from the peaks. Once, at night, I saw the northern lights dancing in the sky, and sometimes, when the sun was at just the right angle, I could spy the faint blue of the glaciers. I took long walks along the creeks, watched the Lenten roses as they blushed open, and thought how I had never been happier in my life, so happy my heart felt like bursting. I learned that spring that I am molecularly suited to high altitudes. Fourteen thousand feet is as high as I've ever hiked, but up there where the air is thin and crisp and the tundra spongy, I feel transcendent.

On one of these alpine vacations, Vadim left me to go to Rome to fetch his baby son, Christian. I didn't know until I read Vadim's book *Bardot, Deneuve, Fonda* that he had had a passionate night with Catherine and that he thought "everything would work out with [her], that [his] relationship with [me] was only a dream, and that Christian would grow up living with a mother and father who loved each other." Reading that so many years later didn't hurt me, but I wondered how I could have been so naïve as to think his commitment to me was real.

I had no experience with the care and handling of infants, but I threw myself into it with enthusiasm when Vadim brought the baby to our chalet that spring. He was truly a hands-on father, comfortable with bottles and diapers. I remember Christian, Nathalie, and me taking our baths together in a tub much too small to accommodate us all. I didn't feel totally sure of myself as a stepmother, but I liked being with the children and having a family. Susan was never far from my heart at those times.

There are certain things you are not supposed to do if you are just becoming a star and want to survive in Hollywood. You don't go and live in an attic with a French director and refuse to come back unless you absolutely have to. But I never followed career rules. For better or worse, I didn't think of myself as a movie star with a real career. I was never fully vested in my celebrity. I felt I'd gotten into it by default, and I wouldn't die if I got out of it by default. I liked the work, the structure it gave my life,

the challenges of different roles, and the pleasure I would sometimes derive from bringing a character to life. I also liked being financially independent. But the choices I made in relation to work were always connected to my relationships or, later, my politics.

In late spring I was offered the title role in *Cat Ballou* with Lee Marvin. It meant returning to Hollywood, but Vadim encouraged me to take it, saying he would come visit whenever he could. For reasons I don't recall, I was under a contract to Columbia Pictures, where *Cat Ballou* was to be made, and this was a way to fulfill part of it. The script was unusual, and I wasn't sure whether it was any good or not. I'm not sure Lee Marvin knew either. I remember him whispering to me one day during rehearsal that the only reason he and I were in the movie was that "we're under contract and they can get us cheap."

*Cat Ballou* was a relatively low-budget undertaking. It seemed we'd never do two takes unless the camera broke down. The producers had us working overtime day after day, until one morning Lee Marvin took me aside.

"Jane," he said, "we are the stars of this movie. If we let the producers walk all over us, if we don't stand up for ourselves, you know who suffers most? The crew. The guys who don't have the power we do to say, 'Shit, no, we're workin' too hard.' You have to get some backbone, girl. Learn to say no when they ask you to keep working."

I will always remember Lee for that important lesson. At least I was learning to say no in my *professional* life.

I have to admit, it wasn't until I saw the final cut of *Cat Ballou* that I realized we had a hit on our hands. I hadn't been around when they filmed Lee's horse, leaning cross-legged up against the barn in what's become a classic image, or the scenes when Lee tries to shoot the side of the barn. I didn't realize how director Elliot Silverstein would use the two troubadours, Nat "King" Cole and Stubby Kaye, like a Greek chorus. It would be my first genuine hit, though its success had very little to do with me. By the way, Nat "King" Cole was every bit as kind and wonderful as I had remembered him from my parents' parties after the war.

During the filming of *Cat Ballou* and the movie I did right afterward for Columbia, *The Chase*, Vadim, Nathalie, and I lived in a rented house in Malibu Colony, right on the beach. Like my father, Vadim loved to fish and would often do so from the shore, pulling in perch and sometimes halibut, which we'd have for dinner. Today, of course, you wouldn't dare



eat fish from Santa Monica Bay even if you did manage to catch one, which is unlikely. The house we rented had belonged to Merle Oberon and was bright and cozy. We paid \$200 a month for it, and I remember how astounded I was when the rent went up to \$500. *What could they be thinking!* Today a house like that rents for closer to \$10,000 a month or more. Back then, average folk who'd been there for decades could still afford to live among the millionaires. The powerful who did have homes there (usually second homes) were considered *avant garde* bohemians.

There were always friends hanging out with us: Marlon Brando; Brooke Hayward and her new husband, Dennis Hopper; my brother and his wife, Susan; Yvette Mimieux, who was dating a young French director; Mia Farrow, who was dating Frank Sinatra; Julie Newmar; Viva, who would star in many Andy Warhol movies; Sally Kellerman; and Jack Nicholson. Every Sunday Larry Hagman would don a gorilla suit and march down the beach followed by a swarm of friends carrying banners.

It was an atmosphere the French would call *désinvolte*, friends casually hanging out, with good food and interesting conversation, what I had always been attracted to but was too shy to have initiated. Now I was learning to create that same ambiance, running a home and making things comfortable for people. We were always entertaining, and any French person who came to Los Angeles made a stopover at our home. Dad said in an interview around this time, "She's outgoing, not at all like me. . . . Look at the kind of home she's created, look at the life they lead out there in Malibu. People coming, people going, all day long, open house all the time, and Jane handling it all so beautifully, making people feel comfortable. . . ."

I was proud of that.

Dad was dating the woman who would be his last wife, a lovely, enthusiastic, pert woman named Shirlee Adams, only slightly older than me. They had taken a house just down the beach from us. Nathalie attended a nearby school, her English had become fluent as had my French, and we were quite a happy family. For Dad, the fact that Vadim was a fisherman created an affinity; besides, he was not immune to Vadim's charm.

Sam Spiegel, one of Hollywood's great producers, offered me a role in Lillian Hellman's *The Chase*, based on a novel by Horton Foote. *The Chase* was to be directed by Arthur Penn and to co-star Marlon Brando,

Angie Dickinson, E. G. Marshall, Robert Duvall, and a relative newcomer, Robert Redford, who would play my husband. What a package, right? What I was to learn, however, was that even the best packaging and assembly of talent can't guarantee success. While the film did fairly well in Europe, it was a flop in the States. My performance certainly didn't help. It was a little like "Barbarella comes to small-town Texas." Maybe out of revenge for all those bad-hair years I'd endured, I was now playing second fiddle to a mane of hair that, as a friend recently said, should have had its own billing.

Two things happened that summer of 1965 that were especially important to me. Strangely enough, both involved parties.

I had a lot of time off during the filming of *The Chase* and decided I would throw a Fourth of July party on the beach. I had never given a big Hollywood party before, but as usual I took it on full bore. I asked my brother, who unlike me was into the new music scene, what band I should hire. The Byrds, he said without hesitation. The Byrds included David Crosby and Roger McGuinn, and there was an underground cult of Byrd Heads who followed them from gig to gig. They were just about to hit big with their version of Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man." Peter's instinct was right on target; they were perfect. We put up an enormous tent with a dance floor right on the beach. I invited Hollywood's old guard, and Peter, wanting to make sure there'd be good dancing, got the word out to assorted Byrd Heads. Think "Big Sur Meets Jules Stein," "Dreadlocks Meets Crew Cut." Dad set up a spit, where he spent the evening roasting and basting an entire pig, glowing in the attention his unusual culinary skills brought him. I saw it as a big improvement for the shy man.

It was called "the Party of the Decade" and was talked about for a long time to come: the first coming together of old Hollywood and the new counterculture. I remember watching a barefoot flower child standing in the buffet line as she pulled out a breast and began nursing her baby—with George Cukor standing right behind her. This was clearly a first for Cukor, who didn't know whether to stare or pretend it wasn't happening. Next to him was Danny Kaye, pretending to be a baby who wanted to nurse. Darryl Zanuck, always one to appreciate beautiful women, looked apoplectic. Sam Spiegel, Jack Lemmon, Paul Newman, Tuesday Weld, novelist/diplomat Romain Gary and his wife, Jean Seberg, Peggy Lipton, Lauren Bacall, William Wyler, Gene Kelly, Sidney

Poitier, Jules and Doris Stein, Ray Stark, Sharon Tate, Warren Beatty, Natalie Wood, Dennis Hopper, Brooke Hayward, Terry Southern, and all those Byrd Heads were floating out on the dance floor as the band played on. When dawn broke and the tents were coming down, Vadim took me in his arms and said, "You pulled it off, Fonda. Good for you."

It was good for me.

That same summer I was invited to a fund-raiser for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), hosted by Marlon Brando and Arthur Penn at Arthur's house. It was the first fund-raiser I had ever been to, and there was an astonishing array of heft in attendance. Two young people from SNCC spoke to us about the organization's efforts to register black voters in Mississippi. The national Voting Rights Act had just passed, but violent resistance from southern segregationists made getting blacks safely to the polls a dangerous undertaking. They painted a vivid picture of secret meetings at night, attack dogs, fire hoses, beatings, and shootings. They spoke of the reasons for SNCC's commitment to nonviolent protest; the courage of the southern blacks who worked with them. Many had been killed, black and white alike.

It wasn't just *what* the SNCC organizers said so much as *how they were* that struck me. There was the calm centeredness of people living beyond themselves. I didn't feel guilt-tripped, but I did feel like an outsider—as Ralph Waldo Emerson must have felt when he went to visit Henry David Thoreau, who was in jail for refusing to pay taxes to a government that supported slavery.

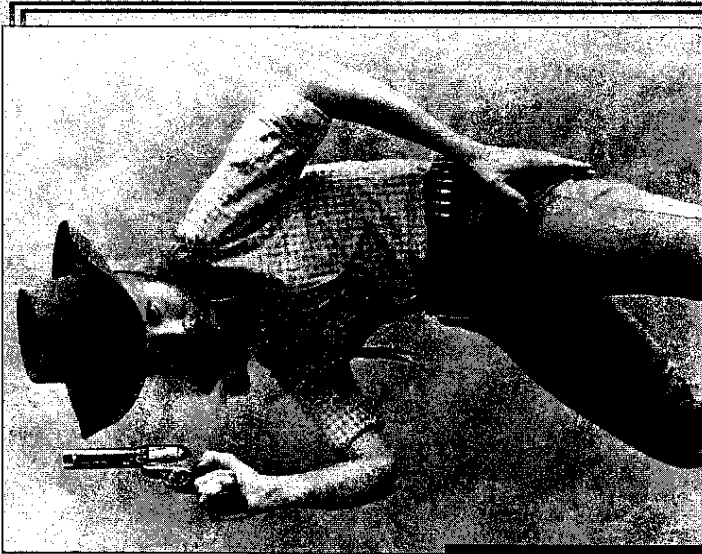
"Henry," said Emerson, "what are you doing in there?"

"Ralph, what are *you* doing out *there*?" Thoreau replied.

What was I doing out here?

A seed was sown. We were asked for money. No one had ever asked me to support a cause before. I gave what I could, but I also became a volunteer for the local SNCC group—writing letters, asking others for money. I was indefatigable. I didn't know how to do it very effectively and I was extremely naïve, but I learned an important lesson that evening: Never underestimate what might be lying dormant beneath the surface of a back-combed blonde wearing false eyelashes. All she might need is to be asked.

That summer I went to my second fund-raiser. All I remember is that Vanessa Redgrave was there, and during the question-and-answer period she raised her hand and, unlike all the others, stood up to speak,



Cat Ballou.  
(Photofest)



The Chase.  
(Photofest)



With Jason Robards  
in Any Wednesday.  
(Photofest)

turning to look at everyone, owning her space. I will never forget my feelings of awe: Here was a woman who controlled her destiny!

Right after *The Chase* I made *Any Wednesday*, the first of the three films I would make with Jason Robards. Vadim was preparing our next picture in Paris, so I was alone most of the time. My brother would come over at night after work, and that's when I realized that while I had been adjusting to domesticity in France, he had been creating a niche for himself and was about to become the new generation's rebel star. It was a funny contrast: I'd have just come from work on the very conventional *Any Wednesday*, and he'd been shooting *The Wild Angels*, a low-budget Roger Corman film. I remember listening in shock while he described a scene where his biker gang had ridden right into a church and had an orgy in the pews. I was definitely an outsider looking in through Peter's eyes, at the new American counterculture. Usually these evenings would end with him pulling out his guitar, and we'd sing Everly Brothers songs in harmony.

Three years later, in 1969, my father, Vadim, and I sat in a private projection room and watched Peter's film *Easy Rider*, which hadn't been released yet. My father really didn't know what to make of it but was awed that his son had co-written and produced it. I loved parts of it, like Jack Nicholson getting turned on to pot around the campfire and the motorcycle odyssey across America. I thought it unbelievably audacious that they carried kilos of cocaine in their bikes and tripped on acid in a cemetery. But I secretly thought it would be too rough and far-out for most audiences. It was Vadim who understood that here was a no-holds-barred cinematic breakthrough that would resonate immediately and become a classic.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

*I could be "anything anybody wanted me to be"—except that I still wasn't even one of the people doing the defining of who this latest-model Galatea would become.*

—ROBIN MORGAN,  
*Saturday's Child*

I WAS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN with a U.S. passport but had become a resident of France—except I *had* no residence. Vadim and I were not married, but we had been together almost three years and were still moving with Nathalie from one rented apartment to another, using furniture left behind by former wives. It was a nomadic lifestyle that suited Vadim, but I felt Nathalie needed more stability, and I needed to nest. I decided that Vadim and I needed a place that was truly ours. I found a very small piece of land thirty-seven miles west of Paris near Houdan. Once there, you meandered down a series of one-lane country roads, through villages hidden behind mossy stone walls, past farmyards and gently undulating fields of oats and barley, interspersed with forests of beech and oak, into and through the hamlet of Saint-Ouen-Marchefroy. Just beyond lay a flat, nondescript piece of land with an old stone farmhouse in great disrepair. I don't know why this was where I landed. Maybe it was the idea of living near a hamlet that appealed to me; maybe it was those stone walls and the proximity of the woods. Having been



smitten with stone walls in Greenwich in my youth, I have remained susceptible all my life.

The hamlet of Saint-Ouen-Marchefroy was a ten-minute walk from the house, and I liked to stroll in at midday when folks were taking a break from their work, to get a sense of who my neighbors were. They had no idea that I was a movie star, and though I never asked, they probably wouldn't have known who Vadim was, either. I became friends with one woman who lived in the farm closest to ours. She liked to give me fruit tarts she'd bake. When I'd visit her, she was always at her sink or stove, and because her hands were wet or greasy, she'd bend her hand back and give me her wrist to shake, a gesture I encountered more than once in that hamlet, the shake of a farmer's wife. (I never got to use it in a movie, alas.) I enjoyed sharing such moments with my neighbors. I would sit in her kitchen, drinking her strong coffee and thinking how lucky I was; my friends back home would not likely get to do this.

Reluctantly I went to Hollywood for several months to make *Any Wednesday*. While there, I decided Vadim and I should get married—at least I think it was my idea. Like buying the farm, I felt marriage would make our commitment deeper, bring normalcy into our relationship, and be better for Nathalie. I think I also wanted to prove I could make it work and pull off something at which Dad had failed.

We arranged for a secret wedding in Las Vegas. Vadim flew up first to get the license. Then, after filming on a Friday, I flew up with my brother and his then wife, Susan; Brooke Hayward and Dennis Hopper; friend and journalist Oriana Fallaci (who was sworn not to write about it); Vadim's mother, Propi; and his best friend, Christian Marquand, with his wife, Tina Aumont. As the plane circled over Los Angeles, we looked down to see Watts in flames, an omen, though I didn't see it as such at the time.

The ceremony took place in our suite at the Dunes Hotel. The minister was disappointed that we'd forgotten to buy rings, claiming that reference to rings was the best part of his speech. So Christian lent Vadim his ring and Tina lent me hers; it was much too large for my skinny finger. I had to hold my finger upright throughout the ceremony, which created the impression that I was giving the whole proceeding the finger. The fact is, however, that I cried when we were pronounced man and wife. We had been together for three years, but I hadn't realized how much formalizing our relationship would mean to me.



*Vadim and me looking around the fixer-upper farm we bought outside of Paris, 1966.*

*Nathalie leading her pony, Gamin, with Christian and me riding and Vadim following. That's the stone wall I built behind us.*

(© David Hurn/Magnum Photos)



After the ceremony, some in our small group began enthusiastically renewing their relationship to Chivas Regal, and by the time we got to dinner, things were starting to feel sad. We ate in a cocktail lounge, where a long buffet table with a massive glass swan sculpture separated us from a stage on which a striptease version of the French Revolution was being performed. We watched as a topless woman was "beheaded" on a guillotine to the strains of Ravel's *Bolero*. I told Vadim I thought we should adjourn to our room. But Vadim disappeared into the casino and I ended up sharing a bed with his mother. I really was ignorant of the realities of compulsive gambling, but it wouldn't have mattered. I was hurt and angry, and as we flew back to Los Angeles the next afternoon, I remember thinking, What have I done? But, like I say, I'd learned to compartmentalize—bury the hurt and move on.

The following year we filmed *La Curée* (*The Game Is Over*), our second film together, and again it was a happy experience for us both. Sharing a common goal, joining in a structured workday, gave sense to our union that often seemed to be lacking outside of work. During the filming of *La Curée*, I received a letter from the Italian producer Dino De Laurentiis asking me to play the title role in *Barbarella*, based on a French comic strip by Jean-Claude Forest. Brigitte Bardot and Sophia Loren had both been offered the role and turned it down, and this was my inclination as well. But Vadim was adamant that science fiction films would be the wave of the future, that this could be a terrific sci-fi comedy, that I should do it, and that he should direct.

Vadim had long been an aficionado of science fiction, and the added whimsy and sexiness of the story clearly played to his strengths. His passion for the idea convinced me to go along. As soon as *La Curée* wrapped, he began working on the script for *Barbarella* with satirist Terry Southern. Meanwhile, I returned to the United States to do the film *Hurry Sundown* with Otto Preminger, Michael Caine, Burgess Meredith, Beah Richards, Faye Dunaway, Robert Hooks, Diabann Carroll, Rex Ingram, Madeleine Sherwood, and John Phillip Law. It was shot in and around Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and while it was ultimately not very good, for me the experience was profound.

The entire cast, black and white alike, was housed in a motel in Baton Rouge, a small city about seventy-six miles from New Orleans. The motel had never been integrated before, and the first night we arrived, a cross was burned on the motel lawn. All the rooms opened onto

a swimming pool, and the day Robert Hooks dove into that pool for the first time, locals peered from around corners as though they expected the pool to turn black. I was sure the reverberations were heard all the way to New Orleans. Diabann Carroll told me how concerned she was because as a black woman from New York, she'd forgotten how to be have "down here in Klan country." She worried that without thinking she'd do something that would be normal for her up north but dangerous down here.

One day we were filming in the small county seat of St. Francisville, in front of the courthouse, when I looked down to see a cute little black boy of about eight shyly watching the filming. I squatted down to talk to him and then, as I was being called back into the scene, I leaned over and gave him a kiss. *Snap!*—someone took a picture of the kiss, and it appeared on the front page of the local paper the next day.

All hell broke loose. Shots were fired into the production wagons, and threatening phone calls were made to the production office about what would happen to us "nigger lovers" if we didn't get out of town—which we did. I was shocked. I hadn't realized what little progress toward desegregation had been made. I'd been to an SNCC fund-raiser and had seen Watts in flames, but I hadn't been paying enough attention. I was still using the term *Negro* while the African-Americans in the cast were calling themselves "black." I listened to conversations between Robert Hooks, Beah Richards, and others following the shooting incident: about a burgeoning "black nationalism"; about Stokely Carmichael calling for "black power"; about a growing sense that blacks had only themselves to depend on. I kept my mouth shut but was disturbed and hurt—poor little me, a white do-gooder, just beginning to feel I could get involved and now being told I wouldn't be wanted by the new black movement they were describing.

For answers, I turned to a white cast member, Madeleine Sherwood. She was a close friend from the Actors Studio, and she'd been in *Invitation to a March* with me. Her longtime partner was black, and she had tried to get me involved in supporting the Freedom Rides. I'd gone to Big Sur instead. Madeleine helped me understand that in the years since I'd been living outside the United States, there had been a sea change in the civil rights movement. The nonviolent strategy that had been its foundation was based on the assumption that there was a latent conscience in America that, when appealed to, would step up and put an end to segre-



gation. What had become apparent to blacks and to white civil rights workers alike was that neither the segregationist South nor the northern white liberal establishment was ready to integrate. Yes, laws had changed. But the new laws did little to alter the segregationists' pathological hatred of integration. The liberal establishment, with some exceptions, seemed to support the movement but refrained from taking strong enough action either to protect civil rights workers from violence or to uphold the law. Apparently the Democratic Party had been too dependent on racist Dixiecrats to dare to rock the boat seriously. But too much had happened and too much blood had been shed for the activists to settle for liberal tokenism. What was the good of new laws if the dismal reality of black lives didn't change? Blacks read the lack of decisive action as a signal that they had to go it alone. Hope had turned to cynicism. Peaceful protest was starting to look less viable than violent action.

I realized that I, who had sat out these turbulent years, never coming close to experiencing what black Americans endured, was in no position to judge the rise of black nationalism, though it was hard for me to comprehend how any group could achieve anything positive through separatism and violence. I thought of my father and his childhood story of the Omaha lynching, and of his hero, Abraham Lincoln—and I wondered how, in this democratic country of ours, we could have made so little real progress.

Vadim was able to visit only for a week or so during the shooting, because he was involved in preparations for *Barbarella*. But during his brief stay, while sitting around the motel pool, he saw the lean, tanned, blue-eyed John Phillip Law emerge from the water like a piece of sculpture—and he decided then and there that he was the one to play *Barbarella*'s Pygar, the blind angel who recovers his will to fly after he and Barbarella make love.

From *Hurry Sundown* I went almost immediately into *Barefoot in the Park*, which would turn out to be my first genuine hit—finally. How I ever survived so many bad films, I'll never know! Charles Bluhdorn, chairman and CEO of Gulf + Western, had just purchased Paramount Pictures, starting what became a wave of corporate buy-ups that would take American moviemaking out of the hands of impassioned, visionary individuals like Irving Thalberg, Jack Warner, Samuel Goldwyn, Harry Cohn, and Louis B. Mayer and turn the studios into corporate subsidiaries. I was informed that Bluhdorn had threatened to throw

himself out of his New York skyscraper if I was cast in the female lead. I don't know why or what changed his mind, but once filming started we got along fine. I was very happy to be working with Bob Redford again and looking forward to our cuddling-in-the-cold-apartment scenes, something I hadn't gotten a chance to do in *The Chase*.

There's something about Bob that's impossible not to fall in love with. We've made three films together, and each time I was smitten, utterly twitter-pated, couldn't wait to get to work, wouldn't even get mad when he was his habitual one to two hours late. He never knew it, of course. Nothing ever happened between us except that we always had a good time working together. I remember the first day he and I showed up in the Paramount administration building. As we walked down the corridors, secretaries stuck their heads out their office doors to watch him go by. Ah, I thought, *he's going to be a star*. But one of the things I love about him is that instead of puffing up his ego, this made him uncomfortable. I have never seen women react to a man the way they do to Bob: In Las Vegas once, when we were filming *The Electric Horseman*, a woman threw herself on the ground at his feet. He seems to want to disappear at times like this.

Of all the male stars I've worked with in my fifty films, Bob is the only one about whom women ask me, "What's it like to kiss him?" The answer I always give is, "Fabulous." The reality is a little different: fabulous for me, not so fabulous for him. He hates filming love scenes. He seems to want to get them over with as soon as possible. Damn it! Fortunately he has a sense of humor about this, and about most everything. Actually, he's a stitch. Besides his male attractiveness, I find a Hepburnesque quality about Bob: You feel that he is somehow better than most other mortals. You *want* Bob to like you, so you are loath to do or say anything that might make him think less of you. This is not someone you would want to gossip about. Maybe this is why, in a town known for gossip, no one tries to get into his business.

In between scenes on *Barefoot in the Park*, we shared stories about growing up in West Los Angeles in the forties, about living in Europe—where he'd also gone to study painting in the fifties (only *he* actually painted)—and about our shared love of horses. But mostly I remember Bob describing with great passion a piece of property he had bought outside of Provo, Utah, the home state of his then wife, Lola. They had designed an A-frame house that they had just built on the property, and



Bob was full of excitement about the construction. Little did either of us imagine then that this property with its little A-frame would become first the Sundance ski resort (where my son, Troy, learned to ski) and later the Sundance Institute, which has made such significant contributions to independent filmmaking.

Making *Barefoot* was a joy. First there was Bob; then we had that flawless script by Neil Simon; and Gene Saks was the perfect comedy director. Everyone in the cast was talented, nice, and fun to work with, especially Mildred Natwick, who'd been in children's theater and then the University Players with my dad.

It's not often that a comedy survives the passage of time, but I have seen *Barefoot in the Park* countless times and I find its appeal to be timeless. Bob's, too.

*Goofing off with Bob Redford between takes on Barefoot in the Park.*  
(Photofest)



*A scene in Barefoot in the Park.*  
(Photofest)



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## BARBARELLA

glass, so that from the camera's point of view the space cabin was behind me and I appeared to be suspended in space. Then I would begin slowly to remove my space outfit while a wind machine blew my hair and the discarded articles of clothing around as though they were floating with me in space. I was terrified that the glass would break; terrified of rolling around like that in the altogether; terrified of not being perfect. Once again, I just didn't think I could say no. But Vadim promised that the letters in the film credits would be placed judiciously to cover what needed to be covered—and they were.

The biggest challenge for us was figuring out how to film the sequences where Pygar, the blind angel, flies through space carrying Barbarella in his arms. A remote control specialist devised a scheme: A huge rotating steel pole stuck out horizontally from a cycloramic gray screen. The pole had large hooks and screws at the end, on which two metal corsets were attached. One corset had been made to fit John Phillip Law and one was for me, and they were skintight because our costumes had to fit over the metal and not look bulky.

We got all suited up, first the cold metal corsets, then the costumes, and then John's wings were strapped onto his back with wires running from the wings to a remote-control machine. Then a crane hoisted us up and we stood on the platform while John was hooked up to the end of the pole. Then my metal corset was screwed to the front of his, putting me into a position that made it look as though he were carrying me. After we had been suited up, hoisted up, and screwed up, the moment of truth arrived. The crane, which until then had been supporting us, was moved away, leaving us suspended in air, with the weight of our bodies jamming our hipbones and crotches into the metal corsets.

It was sheer, utter agony. And with all that, we had to remember our dialogue, look dreamy, and occasionally be funny. The muted sounds of misery I could hear from John (who was bearing the added weight of his wings) told me that his pain was worse than mine, and mine was nearly unbearable. No one had taken our poor crotches into consideration! John was convinced his sex life would be brought to a premature demise.

There we'd hang, while somewhere out in the darkened sound stage the technician worked the remote controls, making the pole rotate this way and that and making John's wings flap up and down. While we hung there, rotating, a film of the sky with clouds moving past (shot from an airplane) was projected onto the gray screen behind us. Nothing of the

WHEN FILMING ON *Barefoot* wrapped, Vadim and I moved to Rome, where *Barbarella* was to be shot at the De Laurentiis studio. We rented a house on the outskirts of the city—part castle, part dungeon. There was a tower next to our bedroom that dated from the second century *before* Christ. At night we regularly heard scuffling and mewing coming from there. One evening during a dinner party in the cavernous living room below, there was a loud noise, some plaster fell from the ceiling, and an owl fell onto Gore Vidal's plate. It turns out that a family of large owls had been making the racket in the tower.

None of the special effects and optical techniques we take for granted today existed in 1967. Vadim and his collaborators had to invent everything, and sometimes the ideas worked and sometimes they didn't. The opening title sequence shows Barbarella peeling off her "astronaut" suit as she floats topsy-turvy in her fur-lined space cabin. Much was made of this unusual scene, the first weightless striptease in movie history (and perhaps the last!). Claude Renoir, brilliant cinematographer and nephew of French film director Jean Renoir, came up with a way to film it while playing around in his hotel bathroom one evening. Here's how it worked: The set of the space cabin, instead of sitting like a normal room that you could walk in and out of, was turned upward so that it faced the ceiling of the enormous sound stage. A pane of thick glass was laid across the opening of the set, and the camera was hung from the rafters directly above it. I would have to climb up a ladder and onto the

*Hey! Nothing is what it seems.*

—MADONNA

sky and clouds could be seen on our faces or costumes, and you couldn't even see what was being projected on the screen until the film had been developed. John and I weren't actually moving forward through space, but the film was to make it appear that way. That was the intention. This type of front projection is common today, but back then it had never been done before—we were the guinea pigs. Lots of things had to work properly at the same time: The steel pole had to rotate in sync with the moving sky, the remote-control specialist had to make Pygar's wings flap in the same way, and the projection onto the gray screen had to function properly. This all took days and days to rig up, while John and I hung there, our private parts growing progressively numb.

I will never forget the first day we finally had rushes to look at. Everyone was excited and anxious, since flying without the help of wires had never been done before and so much depended on the believability of the flying scenes. There was an entire aerial battle that was critical to the story. The lights in the screening room dimmed, the film began to roll and . . . *Oh my God . . . we were flying backward!* It was too funny not to laugh: The one most obvious thing, what direction the clouds and landscape were moving, had been overlooked. But what was also apparent was that once they got us in sync with the background, it would work. It really did look like we were flying, like he was carrying me, like we weren't in pain, like the clouds and mountains were passing by—just going the wrong way.

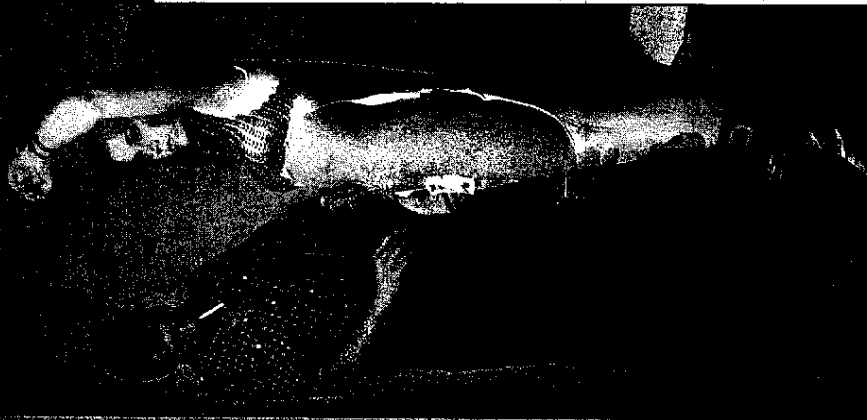
It was a tough shoot, lots of scrapes and bruises. I was attacked by little mechanical dolls. I was shut into a tiny plastic box with hundreds of birds, flying, pecking, and pooping on my hair, arms, and face. I was constantly being asked to slide down clear plastic tubes or stand inside a cloud of noxious fumes. When I see what actors in action films have to do these days, however, I think I got off pretty light.

By today's standards *Barbarella* seems slow (it seemed slow to many critics back then as well). But I think the jerry-built quality of the effects and the offbeat, camp humor give it a unique charm. Pauline Kael, film critic for *The New Yorker*, wrote about my performance: "Her American-good-girl innocence makes her a marvellously apt heroine for pornographic comedy. . . . She is playfully and deliciously aware of the naughtiness of what she's doing, and that innocent's sense of naughtiness, of being a tarnished lady, keeps her from being just another naked actress."



John Phillip Law as the blind angel Pygar carrying Barbarella. The agony doesn't show. (Carlo Bavagnoli/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images)

Vadim making sure all the rips are in the right places. (© David Hurn/Magnum Photos)



Pygar approaching his nest, where we will make love and he will get back his will to fly.





"Just another naked actress" indeed! I can laugh about it now, but the tensions and insecurities that haunted me during the making of that film almost did me in. There I was, a young woman who hated her body and suffered from terrible bulimia, playing a scantily clad—sometimes naked—sexual heroine. Every morning I was sure that Vadim would wake up and realize he had made a terrible mistake—"Oh my God! She's not Bardot!"

At the same time, unwilling to let anyone know my real feelings and wanting, Girl Scoutishly, to do my best, I would pop a Dexedrine and plow onward. The "American-good-girl-innocence" that Pauline Kael described was really the Lone Ranger trying to "make it better."

Vadim's drinking had gotten much worse. He was a binge drinker: He would go for weeks and months without a drop (unfortunate, because it allowed him to feel he had the disease under control), but then things would seem to disintegrate. Partway through the shooting of *Barbarella* he started drinking at lunch, and we'd never know what to expect after that. He wasn't falling down, but his words would slur and his decisions about how to shoot scenes often seemed ill-considered. When I watch certain scenes from the movie now, I remember all too well how vulnerable I felt at the time. And more and more angry!

I was also growing more remote, feeling as if I were out on a limb (or a steel pole) by myself, that no one else seemed to care about what I cared about—like showing up to work sober and on time, getting a good night's sleep so you'd be prepared and creative the next day. But I still lacked the confidence to try to take charge when Vadim seemed particularly out of control.

Today *Barbarella*'s production costs would seem penny-ante, but for the time they were considerable. The cast and crew were large and multilingual, the technical challenges awesome, and too many things, including the script, hadn't been worked out sufficiently in advance. Often I would have to pretend to be sick so that the film's insurance would cover the cost of a shutdown for a day or two while Vadim, Terry Southern, and the others figured out script problems. One thing for sure, I never dreamed the film would become a cult classic and, in some circles, the picture Vadim and I would be best known for. It has taken me many decades to arrive at a place where I can understand why this is so and even share the enjoyment of the film's unique charms.

There was another feeling that began to muddle me. It wasn't a hint

of something I could not yet name—the old feeling of being in the wrong place. But this time it wasn't the feeling there was a party going on that left me out. No. Now my life was the party—one long, unending party that I didn't especially want to be at. Rather, it was a feeling that something more important was going on out there and my life was being frittered away with whatnots and doodads. There were the struggles of blacks in the United States that I'd only just started to learn about. There was a growing anti-Vietnam War movement. But I hadn't followed the war news closely, and when Vadim's French friends criticized the U.S. involvement there, my reaction was usually defensive. I simply couldn't believe that America could be involved in a wrong cause, and I hated having foreigners criticize us. I was totally clueless about the nascent women's movement and would have felt deeply threatened by it had I been exposed to feminism.

It wasn't any specific alternative life I longed for, it was just a sense of growing malaise. I was a go-alonger, a passive participant, living "as if": as if I had a good marriage, as if I were happy and fully present. I was also trying not to be too serious about anything, because if you took things too seriously, it meant you were bourgeois and didn't have a sense of humor. There was a certain tyranny about Vadim's "don't take things too seriously" mandate, especially when it came to women.

When filming on *Barbarella* finished in the fall of 1967, it occurred to me that perhaps I could quiet the malaise and fill the empty place that seemed to be growing larger by having a baby. *Make it better.*

One of the things I liked most about Vadim was how he was as a father. Perhaps it was due to the fact that he'd never entirely grown up himself that he seemed able to inhabit a child's world. His lack of concern about punctuality and the doing of duties served him well when it came to his little children. Every night, after I'd badgered Nathalie into brushing her teeth and going to bed, Vadim would pick up the thread of some phantasmagoric tale he'd have concocted for her. Sometimes the story would go on for weeks. Usually there was an element of science fiction, always of whimsy, with little people turning out to have wondrous big powers. Besides his stories, there were his paintings: Vadim had a unique painting style—primitive, colorful, sensual, in many ways the drawings of a child. Then there was his patience and his generosity with his time—two elements critical to good parenting: Vadim could spend hours debating with his children the origins of the universe, life after

death, the meaning of gravity, the whys and wherefores of life, all with a charm and attention that moved me deeply. He was totally present, at least for his girls, at least when they were little. Come to think of it, it was always true for our Vanessa, too.

Like many people who feel their marriage dissolving, I thought that if I had a child, it would bring us closer. But the desire for a baby wasn't only to save a troubled marriage, it was a way to save *me*. I thought that the experience of childbirth would somehow make me right, that the pain of natural childbirth would deliver me to myself. I still saw myself as deeply flawed, unable to open my heart and love enough to be truly happy.

Vadim thought that having a baby was a splendid idea, so I had my IUD removed, and a month later, during Christmas vacation in Megève, a ski resort in the French Alps—a week after my thirtieth birthday, on December 28, 1967, to be exact—I conceived. I knew the moment it happened and told him so—there was a different resonance to our love-making.

I had a whole round year ahead of me with no commitments except to complete work on our farm, which included planting a garden and a forest. Though I have no conscious memory of my father transplanting the huge pines and fruit trees he brought onto our Tigertail property in the forties, I'm told that he did. I'll wager that way back then is when I got bitten by the tree-transplanting bug that is a trademark of mine. I'm not big on jewelry or fashion, but big trees—now, *that's* something I'll spend money on. I justify it now by pointing out that I'm too old for saplings.

I decided I wanted some very large hardwood trees in our front yard, maples, poplars, birch, catalpa, liquidambar. So I drove all over France to the largest nurseries with the tallest trees I could buy, so tall that they had to be transported at night and telephone lines had to be taken down to let them pass. A friend had given us her car, a 1937 Panhard Levasseur, a real collector's item—but since it no longer ran, I had a welder cut it in half and then solder it together around a newly planted plantain tree so that the tree was growing right through the car—a piece of yard sculpture.

It was in one of the nurseries, searching for trees, that I felt the first wave of nausea. It stopped me in my tracks. I knew exactly what it meant. I didn't need a pregnancy test to tell me. I broke into a cold sweat,

returned to my car to sit down—and was overcome by a sense of dread! I felt I had to muster all my forces against an unknown terror that seemed to have invaded me. *Why? I wanted this!* Then tears came, then racking sobs. *What is happening? This isn't how I'm supposed to feel!*

And then I knew: The pregnancy was incontrovertible proof that I was actually a woman—which meant “victim,” which meant that I would be destroyed, like my mother. It was one of those strange moments when I was feeling what I was feeling while simultaneously standing outside of myself analyzing the feeling—and being shocked by what it meant.

A month or more into the pregnancy, I began to bleed and was told I couldn't leave my bed for at least a month if I wanted to prevent miscarriage; I was given DES (diethylstilbestrol) to prevent miscarriage, a drug that has subsequently been linked to uterine cancer in daughters of mothers who've taken it. Then I came down with the mumps.

I saw these problems as a powerful sign that I was not meant to be a mother, and they provided me with a reasonable justification for backing out of the whole thing. Yet when my French gynecologist recommended I have an abortion because of the risk mumps posed to the fetus, I never for a moment considered that as an option (though I was grateful I had the choice). It's not that Vadim and I weren't concerned. But my attachment to motherhood was so tenuous that I felt if I aborted the fetus, I would never want to have another baby. It was a low point in my life, let me tell you: I had just turned thirty and was pregnant, bedridden, and risking a miscarriage; mumps had swollen my face to the size of a bowling ball; and to top off my misery, across the ocean Faye Dunaway had just created a sensation in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Not that I was competitive or anything.

I had just entered my second act, and as far as I could tell, my life had peaked and was on the decline.

## ACT TWO

# SEEKING

*A hundred struggle and drown in the breakers.  
One discovers the new world. But rather, ten  
times rather, die in the surf, heralding the way to  
that new world, than stand idly on the shore!*

—FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

Cassandra

*Maybe I can do somethin'. Maybe I can scrounge  
around and find out what's wrong and see if there  
ain't somethin' can be done about it.*

—TOM JOAD

in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*